

THE LIFE STORY OF WILLIAM JOHN BRYAN

1859 - 1948



BY

SAMUEL LUTHER ROBERTSON, JR.

## HARDIN-SIMMONS UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

## Manuscript Thesis

Any unpublished thesis submitted for the Master's degree and deposited in the Library of Hardin-Simmons University is open for inspection, but is to be used only with due regard to the rights of the author. Bibliographical references may be noted, but passages may be copied only with the permission of the author. Proper credit must be given in subsequent written or published work. Extensive copying of the publication of this thesis in whole or in part requires also the consent of the Librarian or Dean of Graduate Studies of Hardin-Simmons University.

This Thesis has been used by the following persons, whose signatures attest their acceptance of the above restrictions.

A library which borrows this thesis is expected to secure the signature of each user.

[illegible]

THE LIFE STORY OF WILLIAM JOHN BRYAN

1859-1948

---

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School

Hardin-Simmons University

---

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

---

by

Samuel Luther Robertson, Jr.

July 1973

THE LIFE STORY OF WILLIAM JOHN BRYAN

1859-1948

APPROVED:

Rupert M. Richardson  
James J. Jones  
Howard D. Huff

APPROVED:

Lyle T. Jett  
Dean of Graduate Studies

## PREFACE

The purpose of this paper is to give the life story of William John Bryan (1859-1948), and to gain insight into the man and the time in which he lived. The narrative is necessarily incomplete with reference to certain periods of his life. There is little information extant on his early years; and after he had reached middle age, Bryan retained only that correspondence that he had received.

The collected newspaper clippings about Bryan were serviceable, but most of them were undated with no source designation. Bryan's retention and non-retention of material did provide insight into his interests and habits. Notwithstanding the paucity of sources, it is my hope that I have presented the image of the man and his work in a creditable way.

I am particularly indebted to Dr. Rupert N. Richardson, Senior Professor of History and President Emeritus of Hardin-Simmons University. It was his guidance and encouragement that allowed me to retain and maintain a continuing enthusiasm for this project. I am further indebted to Carol Bryan Izard (granddaughter), Mrs. Julia L. Pickard (niece) and George Minter who helped me to gain further insight into William John Bryan. I am also grateful to my wife, Glynda Kay Robertson, for her patience and encouragement.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE .....	iv
 Chapter	
I. FAMILY AND EARLY YEARS .....	1
II. POLITICS: BEGINNING, DEVELOPMENT, AND SUCCESS .....	20
III. STATE SENATOR .....	45
IV. A POLITICAL CAREER IS ENDED .....	58
V. LAST YEARS: FAMILY AND FRIENDS .....	75
 APPENDIXES	
A. The Cowboys Christmas Ball .....	88
B. Picture of W. J. Bryan - Late 1930's.....	89
C. Map of the T-Diamond Ranch.....	90
D. Abilene 25,000 Club .....	91
E. Letter of West Texas Democratic Rough Riders .....	92
F. Letter (copy) from Theodore Roosevelt.....	94
G. Letter from E. C. Mitchell.....	96
H. Letter from J. R. Harris of Cumberland University .....	98
I. Sleeper letter to Wash Hardy (copy) .....	99
J. Hardy letter to Sleeper (copy) .....	101
K. Letter from Price of Cumberland University .....	105
L. Christmas card with verse by H. E. Hoover .....	106
M. Stop-over at Abilene by John A. Lomax .....	107

N. Interview with W. J. Bryan that appeared in the Abilene Reporter-News .....	114
O. Advertisement for WE'VE NEVER BEEN LICKED .....	115
P. Interview with Bryan about Abilene country .....	116
Q. Bryan interview about cattle industry .....	117
R. Editorial birthday greetings for Bryan .....	119
S. Funeral notice for Senator W. J. Bryan .....	120
T. Probate File 7470 for W. J. and Mattie Dashiel Bryan .....	121
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	124

## CHAPTER I

### Family and Early Years

William John Bryan was born September 28, 1859, on Keechi Creek, Falls County, Texas, the son of Colonel Washington Carroll Bryan and Mrs. Sophia (Wyres) Bryan. At the time of his birth, the family was established and was becoming well known in that section of Texas. The Bryans remained in Falls County for another twenty years before Colonel Bryan decided to move farther west to fresher and unspoiled pastures.

Bryan's maternal forebears had come to Texas seeking their fortunes, and it was only during the generation of Bryan's grandfather that the Wyres family began to accumulate any material possessions. Robert Wyres, the grandfather, was born in Virginia<sup>1</sup> on April 4, 1804, and died on July 31, 1888. He was buried in Cedar Hill Cemetery in Abilene, Texas.

Wyres had been orphaned at an early age, and the family had suffered accordingly. There was little choice for a male child left in these circumstances. If one were fortunate, one could go into a

---

<sup>1</sup>Letter from Col. L. B. White of Clint, Texas to W. J. Bryan, November 24, 1935, the W. J. Bryan Papers, Hardin-Simmons University. Unless indicated otherwise all letters cited in this study are addressed to W. J. Bryan and are in Bryan's correspondence.



seven-year apprentice program. Such arrangements were made for Wyres to give him a trade, but he soon decided to leave home.<sup>2</sup>

Robert Wyres made his way from Virginia to Texas by a long and circuitous route. Because of his lack of financial means, he was forced to move in conjunction with available odd jobs and financial opportunities. The Virginian eventually settled near Marlin, Texas, and entered the cattle business. As the years passed, Wyres became successful. One of his two daughters was Sophia, who later became the mother of William John Bryan.<sup>3</sup>

The Bryan family is somewhat similar in their background and heritage. They claimed to share in a royal lineage in their ancestral homeland of Ireland. According to N. H. Kincaid, the Bryans, like many of the Irish, refused to submit to what they considered to be the indignities of their British overlords.

Eventually the Bryans settled in Williamson County, Tennessee. It was there that Washington Carroll Bryan was born on January 15, 1824.<sup>4</sup> Like Wyres, Bryan suffered a severe loss through the death of his mother early in his life. Then in 1844, Bryan's father died leaving him to build his own life and future.

Wash Bryan began to make his way to Texas in a circuitous manner, as had Wyres. For a two year period, the young traveler

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> N. H. Kincaid, "Bryan of the T-Diamond" (Unpublished biographical manuscript), p. 2. Mrs. Kincaid secured her information from W. J. Bryan.

remained working in Mississippi. In 1846, he was serving on a ship that docked in Galveston, and he decided that this would be the place of opportunity for him.<sup>5</sup> In search of his future, the new Texan first moved to Port Lavaca, then to Indianola and then on to Gonzales. In Gonzales, he joined his uncle and began the first efforts that eventually led him into ranching.

In Gonzales, Wash Bryan went to work for a young Scottish blacksmith by the name of Jim Millar. After a training period, Wash was made a partner. Since they were located on one of the trails that the settlers were traveling to the frontier, their business prospered. Eventually they expanded their operations to include a wagon shop.<sup>6</sup> Shortly afterwards an event took place that influenced Bryan's life and future interests.

The little town of Gonzales was subjected to a flurry of excitement when a mounted troupe of Mexicans rode into town in the Fall of 1847. The sheriff stationed himself so that he might watch them and wondered were they troops sent to recapture Texas? They might be troops, or they might be robbers. In either case they would represent a threat as the war between the United States and Mexico had begun. The Mexicans stopped in front of the blacksmith shop where Bryan met them. They had come to order a dozen branding irons for one of the well known haciendas in Mexico.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

Evenso, the young blacksmith was excited by the looks of the Mexican horses. They seemed to have all of the characteristics necessary for a cowpony. The brand on the horses also intrigued him. It was a single T riding an elongated tip of a diamond. When the Mexican horsemen rode out of Gonzales with their dozen branding irons and other supplies for which they had paid, Bryan had found the horse and the brand that he would use to establish his future and his name.<sup>8</sup>

From these Mexican visitors, Bryan had bought a stallion and twelve mares. This was the beginning of what came to be the ruling passion in his life, raising and trading horses.

In late 1849, the young Texan sold his share of their business and left Gonzales to join Henry McCullough and his band of Texas Rangers.<sup>9</sup> The Comanches had been making a number of raids in the San Saba Country, and McCullough and his Texas Rangers had been formed to subdue them.<sup>10</sup>

This activity did not preclude Bryan's continuing his efforts as a horse raiser. His business was prospering, and he was said to have accumulated \$10,000 in a relatively brief period. The horse business provided a bonus for Wash Bryan in the late 1850's. Robert Wyres, a Falls County rancher, wanted to buy some of the increasingly famous T-Diamond cowponies. When Bryan delivered the cowponies, he was the beneficiary of a second stroke of good fortune.

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

Robert Wyres was the proud father of two daughters. Wash Bryan was taken with the youngest daughter, Sophia. He began to court her, and they were married in 1859.<sup>11</sup> The marriage began a period of even faster expansion for the T-Diamond brand. Soon the brand was on longhorns as well as horses. The couple settled near Marlin, Texas. The only blemish was the approaching darkness of the War between the States.

Wash Bryan rode away to the Civil War; but his ranch did not deteriorate and fail, as did many. The reason was his young bride Sophia. She stepped in to run the ranch during her husband's absence, and the ranch continued to grow and prosper. Colonel L. B. White said, "She was the best cow-woman I ever saw, she showed me cows to the seventh generation out of thousands of their cattle, and could<sup>12</sup> tell you the mother of any cow or steer they owned." She was generally considered to be one of the exceptional people of her time. When Sophia Bryan died in 1904, her passing was considered to be of newsworth in the cattle centers and many major cities of the United States. The papers referred to the passing of a "Cattle Queen."<sup>13</sup>

As John Bryan matured, his family provided him many educational opportunities. When he reached the proper age, he was sent to Texas A. & M. College.<sup>14</sup> While John was at college, his father

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Letter from Colonel L. B. White of Clint, November 24, 1935.

<sup>13</sup> N. H. Kincaid, "Bryan of T-Diamond (Unpublished biographical manuscript), p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> John A. Lomax, "Stopover at Abilene," Southwest Review (June, 1941), p. 408.

became increasingly restive. He felt that his ranching operations could be managed more lucratively in a country that was less developed than the Marlin area. Wash Bryan made his decision to move west, and in the Spring of 1879, he began a drive with 1800 head. Before the Bryans left Marlin, a going-away party dance was held. John came home from college to the party, and L. B. White described it, "we had our herds near the road and when the boys saw us they started up some music. Both herds started at full speed towards the band. After they were stopped, they stood and listened to the music like so many people."<sup>15</sup>

The T-Diamond was set up in Jones County, but the land and range extended into Fisher, Haskell, Stonewall and Kent Counties. It was free range, but Wash Bryan did buy a shack made of shinnery poles and dirt. In buying the shack, Wash received the use of twenty miles of land in all directions.<sup>16</sup> Later at different times he bought much of the land that made up his early range. The ranch headquarters were located some three and one-half miles north of the present town of Hamlin, Texas.<sup>17</sup> John Bryan arrived at the new ranch headquarters the following Fall.

In the Spring of 1880, the young college graduate went with a trail herd to Dodge City. The drive went up the Western Trail that skirted the Llano Estacado and passed west of the modern city of

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 408.

Wichita Falls, Texas. The cattle crossed the Red River into the Indian Territory west of the modern town of Altus, Oklahoma, then northward to cross the Canadian River west of Woodward, Oklahoma, and then on to the North Canadian River. The herd finally crossed the Cimarron River almost directly south of Dodge City, Kansas.<sup>18</sup>

It was during this drive that Lige Carter, long time cowhand and foreman, found himself in another of his "situations." On their arrival in Dodge City, the cowboys repaired to the back of the barber shop to "peel off" and remove the accumulated grime and dirt. Carter's corduroys were stiff enough to remain standing when he took them off, and he left them in the corner. There was much splashing of water while Carter took his bath. Suddenly there was a shout from him, "Say, do you remember them socks I lost on the trail? Well here they are, still on my feet. They's just got so slicked over I couldn't see them!"<sup>19</sup>

In this early ranch period, the business and social life of Jones and neighboring counties was located primarily in Fort Griffin. Years later Bryan reminisced about the early days at Fort Griffin to many friends, including John A. Lomax of Dallas.

The first I saw Ft. Griffin, the fact was I went there to cash a check for \$2000 in payment for a bunch of steers I had sold to Will Moore. The same was drawn on the F. E. Conrad & Co.

I had passed the Texas Wagon Trail, leaving my horse in my stall. I had requested that they currie the foam from his flank and sweaty sides. I had ridden into the town at eventide, and I was quick to notice how the flag floated. It fluttered the tide and breeze and kept a live movement. I was quick to notice near the

---

<sup>18</sup> Kincaid, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

river the shore of the Tee Pee--a town of the Tonkay Indians, the streets of the town was full of people, and the counters of this big supply store showed a good deal of attractiveness. There were many women shopping here, as busy as a bunch of birds could be. One peculiar thing that I haven't forgotten there was a big Tonk/w/ay buck who wanted to show himself off. He wore soldiers suit that evidently some officer had abandoned. It was well a comic picture for he likewise wore an old two story biggum hat and showed much pride. To this--that drab face shines as the sun lited against him in the evening time.<sup>20</sup>

In another reminiscence about the early Fort Griffin, Bryan gives us some insight in the community life and attitudes.

Griffin is seen in the spot light--a cow town, and so you turn to enter a barber shop where you can get news of the dark ages, and especially with much being said about buffalo whiskers that lay around the barber chair. Here you could hear much about politics and the news that was brought in by the overland stage. The barbers knew who was to be the next marshall or constable. Bill Gilson appeared much the favorite so in taking a barbers chair you are interested in the artful way in which he straps his Wade and Butcher razor--you naturally listen to him as he swing a long swipe at this strap. He throws a new edge for a newcomer. The town simply awakes to a glad welcome and its here that you notice a bunch of the two circle bars taking their seats while the barber remarks that with the epic picture to follow the lives of these fellows, and he further spoke about the city entertaining them, and said they were the folks that fit the bar rail, and they knew how to squad right and left, and one is noticed taking a drink as he raises his glass he says "Here's How Old Timer."<sup>21</sup>

The young ranchman remembered that in Fort Griffin people often dressed when they were in town.

Looking towards another section of the famous city the banquet hall was open and an old man was at the door holding the crowd back. Col. Simpson of hash-knife fame said to the crowd--"come in gentle boys and don't muddy the water." The most attractive thing about a banquet of this kind was the way the cattle barons had tailored themselves in Julius Winters & Sons Suits. The tailors had sent their drummers out into the "wild west," so that the cattlemen

---

<sup>20</sup>W. J. Bryan, "Reminiscences of Ft. Griffin," (a copy possibly prepared for John Lomax), (October 23, 1944), p. 1.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

are well dressed and much champagne was drunk. One man was noticed to speak a toast--first he said "Here's How" Champagne to real friends, and real pain to sham friends.<sup>22</sup>

Life was not completely one of dirt, manure, and cattle for the more successful ranchers. According to Bryan, Fort Griffin had its share of the fairer sex.

There are few people left who had the pleasure of spending a day in Ft. Griffin when she was queen of the Brazos, so we talk about those heroes--for instance there is Rody Kate, a miss who is quick to express herself--some knew who she was or who she once was, but they agree she is quite herself tonight when in the dance hall--same as that pique and attractive girl that the boys call sweet Ann, now dancing a two-step with one spur Charlie.

Miss Kate was a wild supplement of the wild seventys, watch her as she chats with one of these heroes of '76. She presents, under the dance hall lights, a tinge of Senorita seemingly living in the land of Romania and excitement, she presents a blonde queen in a monte deck. She can relax and feel innocent and maybe she is telling her companion the pleasure she just had reading Deadwood Dick story or in half tears she recited an instance that puts her in tears, yes, she admits that half the time reading "East Lynn" I would leave a grin or a tear on every page.<sup>23</sup>

The T-Diamond Ranch continued to depend and rely on the Mexican cowpony stock that Wash Bryan had first seen in Gonzales in 1847. These cowponies had become famous throughout the southwest, and they were described by southwestern poet, songster and folklorist Walt Cousins in the following manner:

I believe old bronco mashers will side me  
in sayin' it ain't any bluff,  
That the man who set on T-Diamonds  
Will allus be a-knowin' his stuff.

---

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.



These hellians might paw at the new moon  
 An' take a few kicks at the sun,  
 In shoin' a would-be bronc buster  
 Just how tough buckin' was done.<sup>24</sup>

It was Wash Bryan's theory that the geldings should be allowed to run wild until they were full grown, four year olds. Until then, the elder Bryan called them colts. Some of the horses were widely known, such as the cutting horse, Tablerock, and the well known cutting horse, Trouble, that had been staked to Bryan's top hand Charlie Tompkins.<sup>25</sup>

Another of Bryan's stories was set in the Fall of 1880. It was shortly after Bryan had arrived at the new ranch headquarters. There was a heavy snow storm, and the site of Abilene was covered by a six inch snow. The snowfall on November 5, 1880, was unseasonably early and impressed the young cattleman greatly. In later years, he told of a horseback ride he made at that time from Fort Phantom Hill, a village in Jones County, twelve miles north of the site of Abilene, to Buffalo Gap which was then the county seat of Taylor County twelve miles to the south. He was an excellent rider on a good horse and did not suffer from the cold.<sup>26</sup> The ride of some twenty-four miles was completed in about ten hours. The stillness, peace and the beauty of the experience stayed with him for the rest of his life.

---

<sup>24</sup> Kincaid, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Author unknown. "Interview with W. J. Bryan," Abilene Reporter-News, (date unknown).

While the ranch was being established, John engaged in the normal ranching activities on his father's T-Diamond. During one cattle drive, cowboy Lige Carter found himself in another of his situations. When the cattle came to a water crossing, they found a wagon there. In the wagon was a woman whose husband had been forced to go for supplies to repair their wagon. Shortly, Bryan noticed that Carter had disappeared but he paid little attention to his absence. He soon learned that the cowboy had gone by to have a chat with the young woman. Shortly, Carter came riding up to the cattle fast and took his drive position with the herd. Soon the drive was overtaken by an agitated and angry man, the husband of the woman at the crossing. The man went directly to Carter and confronted him with a shotgun. Bryan followed, alarmed at the anger the "nester" evidenced. Upon his arrival Bryan noticed that Carter began to open and shut his eye repeatedly as if it were twitching. The man looked at Carter for a while, and then rode slowly away. After the angry "nester" left, Bryan inquired of the cowboy what he had done to give offense. "I wunk at her," he said.<sup>27</sup>

This experience led to a diminishment of Carter's amorous activities for a brief period. Bryan later said that he wondered what would have happened if the man had attempted to shoot Carter. J. Frank Dobie said that this was the best cowboy story he had ever heard. It

---

<sup>27</sup> Statement by Dr. Rupert N. Richardson, personal interview, July, 1971.

illustrates the strict code of social-marital relations of that day and the ingenuity and mental alertness of the cowboy.<sup>28</sup>

Another of John's ranching stories dealt with himself. He was traveling across the Abilene country, and a norther hit with little warning as they often did. When night overtook him he came across a dugout where he made himself known and the hostess invited him in. She was alone, but she assured the young West Texan that he would be welcome to bed down in the single room dugout, though there was little room. Sometime later her husband returned to the dugout, and she explained that the six footer lying there was a "kid" whom she was befriending. In the dim light of a kerosene lamp the head of the dugout looked at Bryan's head and shoulders and his feet some six feet away and exclaimed: "Kid! What'll he look like when he grows up?"<sup>29</sup>

During 1884, W. J. Bryan decided to return to school to become an attorney, and enrolled in Cumberland University, Lebanon, Tennessee. Cumberland at that time was a widely known law school. Young men from throughout the South went there to prepare themselves for a legal career. An attraction of the school's program was a course of instruction which permitted a student to proceed at his own rate. The result was that many of the students finished their programs quicker than they would have in most of the law schools of that day.

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

There were no dormitories at the law school and John took a room with a local family. The people were friendly, but they regarded him as an uncouth cowboy who had just joined civilization. After a few days, he was invited to a party or dance and came down from his upstairs room wearing a dress suit and a diamond that had been bought with a carload of cattle. The family was awestruck.<sup>30</sup>

During this period, Bryan subscribed to the Homoletic Review, The London Times and Town Topics of New York. His selection of these three periodicals is indicative of the range of his interests. The Homoletic Review was a religious and philosophical periodical that was considered to be the most qualitative journal of its period. Though Bryan was not a religious man in the traditional sense, he had an abiding interest in that which is other than temporal. The London Times was considered to be the most comprehensive newspaper with reference to world events. The Town Topics of New York was a periodical which chronicled social activities in what was considered to be the most literate manner of its day. Therefore, by these subscriptions Bryan had established himself as one who was knowledgeable and interested in contemporary activities, social events and the theological and philosophical.<sup>31</sup>

Bryan completed his law studies, but he never practiced to any great extent. However, he never regretted his legal education

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> The selection of these periodicals was representative of the intellectual interests and range.

because it allowed him to deal with many different and varied situations in his life. At the close of his second school days period, he returned to begin his participation in the management of his father's ranch.<sup>32</sup> This was in 1887 at the end of the great boom in cattle, and it was a difficult period of reevaluation and redirection.

In the 1880's W. J. Bryan began to take on the responsibilities of manhood. From this point, his stories are personal reminiscences, and not family stories. He had developed an impressive personality and was a unique man. One of the stories that Bryan used to tell dealt with the fabled judge John Lynch. Lynch was a judge who presided at the vigilante trials of cattle rustlers. The story dealt with the brand which was ascribed to Lynch. Bryan said, "Judge Lynch used a branding iron that pictured a buzzard sitting on a fence-rail. Cattle thieves let cattle graze on, that wore that sign. They never bothered 'em."<sup>33</sup>

Bryan often used the Lynch story to illustrate a point. He said that frequently Northerners were unable to understand why a cattle thief would be hanged and a murderer freed. The explanation for this type of justice according to Bryan was, "that there were plenty of men running loose in the world who ought to be hung and nary a yearling that ought to be stolen."<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup>Kincaid, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>33</sup>Lomax, op. cit., p. 411.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., pp. 411-412.

It was in the 1880's that Bryan began to collect the many items which became part of the folklore and history that he so fondly remembered. Among the items that he had collected were wooden ox-yokes, skillets (used by cowboys on drives), cow and calf bells, buffalo knives, the horns of a longhorn steer that almost killed him, and many other momentos of his past.<sup>35</sup>

In the early days of the ranch there was much business to be attended to, and much of it was conducted in the earlyday town of Buffalo Gap. However, by that time the newly founded town of Abilene, which became the county seat on January 22, 1883, had begun to replace Buffalo Gap as the commercial center of Taylor County. Bryan first began to show his life-long interest in history. He began to study the powder magazine at Fort Phantom Hill.<sup>36</sup> Also, a letter from a Miss Julia Russell of Staunton, Virginia, notified him of his being accepted by the Lee and Jackson Literary Society. She indicated an awareness of the young ranchman's interest in history by telling him of the society's periodical and asking him to submit material for publication.<sup>37</sup>

During this period of establishing the T-Diamond Ranch, times were not easy, and in later years he was reminded of the hard times by Frank Cannon who worked for York Draper and Company, a cattle

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 412-416.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 416-417.

<sup>37</sup> Letter from Julia Russell of Staunton, Virginia, January 1, 1884.

dealing firm, during the mid 1880's.<sup>38</sup> The cattle market was glutted, prices fell, drought depleted the ranges, and the times were hard for all ranchers.

It seemed that the weather was most extreme, no matter what the season. In January, 1885, there was a severe blizzard that hit the region and killed many cattle. Then the drought that followed in 1886 became epochal. Cattle starved by the thousands. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the Bryans according to W. J. Bryan's statement years later, branded 2,500 calves the year following the blizzard.<sup>39</sup>

It is evident that W. J. Bryan was interested in law and may have done some practice. One Bud Coleman wrote a letter to him from the Colorado City jail on September 25, 1885, rebuking Bryan for a slighting remark about him. This remark had been reputedly made during certain legal negotiations, and Coleman said that he was disappointed because he had always believed that Bryan was a gentleman.<sup>40</sup> One must ask where Coleman had received his information. Was he a contemporary of Bryan's who had gone wrong? Unfortunately, there is no further correspondence extant, and Coleman probably had just been aware of the growing Bryan reputation.

---

<sup>38</sup>Letter from Alan F. Wilson (a veteran cattleman who reviewed conditions as they were in the 1880's) of Washington, D. C., May 20, 1943.

<sup>39</sup>Abilene Reporter-News, date and page unknown (probably the 1930's) from an interview with W. J. Bryan.

<sup>40</sup>Letter from Bud Coleman in the Colorado City jail, September 25, 1885.

The T-Diamond Ranch continued to develop and grow over the next several years. Washington Bryan was the operator and made most of the decisions, but his son had some share in the operation of the ranch. By 1888, the ranch had 101 saddle horses in pasture.<sup>41</sup> This indicates a relatively large and continuing operation. Assuming that there were four horses per ranchhand for remounting purposes, it would indicate a riding population of at least twenty-five men at peak times.

Also, this period gives the first clear indication that W. J. Bryan owned considerable real estate. In a letter dated September 2, 1889, L. H. Blanton of the United States Treasury Department agreed to buy land block twenty in Abilene from Bryan. The government agreed to pay \$2,500 for the site to be used as the location of a new Federal Building.<sup>42</sup> His real estate became an even great source of income for W. J. Bryan in later years, but it never supplanted his ranching income. For this reason, Bryan continued to think of himself as a rancher.

With the beginning of the 1890's, John Bryan began to take on further characteristics of maturity. In the late 1880's, he had met a young woman who had made an impression on him, Miss Martha Chaplain Dashiell. Martha was born in San Marcos on June 17, 1861, to the Reverend and Mrs. B. D. Dashiell. The Reverend Dashiell was

---

<sup>41</sup>Kincaid, op. cit.

<sup>42</sup>Abilene Reporter-News, interview with W. J. Bryan, date and page unknown.



the Methodist Bishop of Texas. Martha had taught music at Southwestern University until she decided to move to Abilene.<sup>43</sup> Upon her arrival in Abilene, she lived with Mr. and Mrs. Washington Carroll Bryan, parents of W. J. Bryan. From the time of her arrival in 1888, she taught music and came to know her future husband.

When Bryan and Martha decided to marry, he selected Austin as the site for their marriage rites. After much preparation, the couple was married on May 31, 1892.<sup>44</sup> It was the beginning of a fifty-six year marriage, that ended with Mrs. Bryan's death. Bryan survived her by only sixteen days, dying on August 26, 1948.

The occasion of their marriage signaled the growing prominence and renown of Bryan in cattle and political circles. Letters, telegrams, and personal communications expressed joy and pleasure at the marriage. Prior to his marriage, John Bryan had been an ardent and attentive swain to the young ladies of the Abilene country.<sup>45</sup>

Shortly after his marriage, Bryan returned to Texas A & M College to visit his old alma mater. Some thirteen years had passed since he had seen his old room at the college. During the visit he walked across the drill field remembering the times and people of his college days. This nostalgic visit came shortly before he actively entered politics. This visit was evidently a period of evaluation, organization, and commitment to his future. This brings

---

<sup>43</sup>Abilene Reporter-News, undated article.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Letter from R. L. Paschal of Ft. Worth, December 17, 1942.

the preparatory period to a conclusion, and Bryan is now on his course of active participation in Texas and national politics. He is married, and he has built the house at 1740 North First Street, Abilene, that he will live in until his death. He soon decided to run for the state legislature.

## CHAPTER II

### Politics: Beginning, Development, and Success

In the middle and late 1890's, W. J. Bryan increasingly involved himself in politics. This interest in politics culminated in his decision to stand for the state legislature in 1900. He occasionally spoke on political subjects, he attended local and state political conventions, and he cultivated friends both at home and in other communities. Many years later, he was asked why he entered politics and he replied, "I had never been to the penitentiary and felt that if I could not go there, I might as well go to the legislature."<sup>1</sup> A more serious quotation from Bryan about his entering politics was, "political life is a sport to me and I think that patriotism should be the trump card in all legislative action and not one of personal welfare or the money to be had."<sup>2</sup> This second quotation fits more closely with his articulated political philosophy and his recorded actions. It is also noteworthy that Bryan's circumstances, financial and personal, made it possible for him to assume such a stance.

There is little information extant on John Bryan's campaign for a seat in the Texas House of Representatives. Accounts indicate

---

<sup>1</sup>Abilene Reporter-News, date and page unknown.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

that he made only a few speeches, circulated among voters as much as possible with his friendly smile and handshake, and cultivated the newspapers of his district for favorable publicity. He avoided explicit statements of platform, promising to represent the people on any given issue according to his best judgment. He was always bland and to a great degree non-committal.

After winning the nomination and the election, Bryan turned his attention to the business of the legislature. This was the beginning of the most important and memorable period of his life. Hitherto, he had been just a personable and somewhat misplaced young man. He had been more the son of Washington C. Bryan, than a person in his own right. From his entry in politics, he became widely known and respected for his individual accomplishments.

When the twenty-seventh Texas legislature convened on January 8, 1901, the honorable W. J. Bryan was sworn as the representative of House District number 107; District 107 consisted of Jones, Shackelford, Callahan and Taylor counties. Bryan joined in the unanimous vote for Speaker H. E. Prince of Navarro.<sup>3</sup> Prince had been nominated, and his nomination had been seconded by John Nance Garner of Uvalde (who later became Speaker of the State House, United States House of Representatives, and Vice President of the United States). The organizational processes of the Texas Legislature were essentially the same as those used today.

---

<sup>3</sup>Texas House Journal, 27th. Legislature (January 8, 1901),

Bryan received some good committee assignments considering the fact that he was a freshman representative. One committee assignment, that was particularly valuable, was that on Asylums.<sup>4</sup> Also he began to work for the placement of a state school in his district. Another valuable committee assignment was on Public Lands and Land Office.<sup>5</sup> Such an assignment was especially valuable for the representative from a developing area where a considerable part of the land was still owned by the state.

In his continuing good fortune, Bryan was placed on the Committee on Irrigation. Since water has always been a major consideration and even problem in Bryan's district, it was a valuable assignment. His two other committee assignments were Private Land Claims and Congressional Redistricting under the Twelfth Census.<sup>6</sup> This last committee on redistricting put him in a position of collective power; the men who determine redistricting exercise great authority every decade.

The first bill presented by Bryan in the State Legislature was bill number 46, "to validate certain land sales of public lands."<sup>7</sup> The bill dealt with land that had previously been sold to minors and married women and attempted to protect their rights.

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>6</sup> Lomax, op. cit., p. 413.

<sup>7</sup> Texas House Journal, op. cit., p. 71.

As might have been expected, the bill stirred little response in the House, and it died on the Speaker's table.

Another Bryan bill, number 47, dealt with the venue of suits which had been filed against a railroad. It required that such suits had to be filed in the county of the jury.<sup>8</sup> Such a bill would favor the railroad by not allowing the plaintiff to choose the county which would be more receptive to his claim. Though this bill died on the Speaker's table, it was the beginning of a long and fruitful relationship between Bryan and the railroads. In many instances other legislators would request that Bryan assist them in getting a railroad pass because of his favored position. In later years Bryan would point with pride to a wall display made up of all of the railroad passes that he had received down through the years.

His third bill was number 48. Its purpose was to create voting precincts from two or more justice of the peace precincts, with a unanimous concurrence of the voters.<sup>9</sup> This bill received more attention than did the first two bills by the freshman legislator, but it died in committee.

It was in his fourth bill that Bryan saw his greatest legislative success of the Twenty-seventh Legislature. The bill was not only considered, but it was passed by both the House and Senate only to be returned by the Governor. Its purpose was to appropriate money from the general revenue fund to build a branch of the Epileptic,

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 71-72.

Insane Asylum in Abilene. The institution had been authorized by the preceding legislature but the appropriation had not been made. The bill provided for an appropriation of \$75,000 in 1901 and \$125,000 in 1902.<sup>10</sup> Though the bill failed initially, it was in this particular area (acquiring a state institution for Abilene) that Bryan later achieved his greatest legislative success.

The West Texan's Bill number 342 was for the purpose of conferring certain authority on the land commissioner to pay miscellaneous office receipts to the state treasurer.<sup>11</sup> Prior to this time, the land commissioner could retain such receipts as he deemed proper, which was the source of duplication and fiscal irresponsibility. The bill died on the Speaker's table.

Though there were two called sessions of the Twenty-seventh Legislature, the West Texan took little part in them. In fact, the only specific reference to him in both of the sessions was his request to be excused from attendance because of the press of personal business.<sup>12</sup> In evaluating his first legislative session, one must center on his committee assignments and legislative participation. None of his bills were enacted into laws, but he did attain some recognition in the house as a "team" member. He worked well with his colleagues, and they evidently liked to work with him.

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 103-104.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 400.

<sup>12</sup> Texas House Journal, 27th Legislature, 1st. and 2nd. called sessions, (1901), 36.

Bryan's committee assignments were above average in their importance and prestige for a freshman legislator. The bills he presented were bills that came from his committees, and one must assume that the legislative leadership must have considered him to be of merit. Another thing that one might state about this legislative term is that Bryan was representing his people honestly. Another thing that strikes the observer is the developing pattern in Bryan of personal contact legislative methodology. He had already begun to deal behind the scenes, a characteristic that became more pronounced as his career continued. He never attempted to indicate his influence by the number of bills he presented.

He was becoming increasingly prominent as a Texas politician. He received and accepted many speaking invitations in and out of his legislative district. He impressed at least a few of his constituents. For instance, as early as March 7, 1901, he received a letter from a long-time friend, H. E. Hoover, praising his legislative and political performance.<sup>13</sup>

In 1902, Bryan announced his candidacy for re-election to the State House, and he was re-elected with little opposition. He was even more prominent in the next session, and his counsel was increasingly sought by business and professional people. He was elected from a district that was essentially the same, but it was called District Number 18.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Letter from H. E. Hoover Canadian, Texas, March 7, 1901.

<sup>14</sup> St. Louis Republic, February 23, 1903.



The Twenty-eighth Legislature opened in January, 1903, in Austin. Pat M. Neff was selected as the new Speaker of the Texas House.<sup>15</sup> Bryan again assumed a position on the team of the Speaker. He introduced or shared in five bills which were submitted to this session. Again, he withdrew behind the scenes to accomplish his goals.

Bryan's first bill of the session, bill number 20, was highly controversial. It pertained to the cattle industry, a field in which Bryan's competency and interest could match or surpass that of any other legislator. It established a quarantine against the Texas cattle tick, an insect that spread the dreaded Texas cattle fever, and required that cattle shipped across the line into tick-free territory be dipped. In his "Open Season Livestock Quarantine" bill, Bryan proposed that in winter, cattle might cross the quarantine line without being dipped provided they were kept confined and under observation for from ten to sixty days. The bill provided for an appropriation of \$20,000 to administer the plan.<sup>16</sup> The bill passed the House, but it died in the Senate. It failed in the Senate, because many cattlemen opposed it. Bryan claimed that he had won his cause because more dipping facilities were provided on a voluntary basis to avoid the passage of a law requiring it.

Another co-sponsored bill by Bryan was number 205 for the creation of the Fifty-second Judicial District to consist of Coryell,

---

<sup>15</sup> Texas House Journal, 28th. Legislature, (1903), pp. 3, 4.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

Hamilton and Comanche counties.<sup>17</sup> The people in these counties felt that they needed a judicial district located in their area, and one that would be more closely attuned to their own needs. They were not Bryan's constituents but he represented the House Committee in putting the measure through. The bill received several changes in the Senate, but it was presented to the Governor in a relatively unchanged manner. He signed it and it became a law.

Bryan served as a co-sponsor of House Bill number 390, which was to provide for the removal of epileptics from insane asylums to an epileptic colony.<sup>18</sup> This law was of special interest to the people of Bryan's district. In 1899 the legislature had authorized the building of a "branch asylum" for epileptics. The Twenty-seventh Legislature in 1901 established the institution as the Epileptic Colony at Abilene. The bill which Bryan promoted put the institution into effect by providing for the removal of epileptics to it. At present the institution is the Abilene State School.

Bryan was also the co-sponsor for House Bill number 410, entitled "To Fix Judges' Salaries of Higher Courts." This bill referred to the State Supreme Court, the Appellate, and several district courts.<sup>19</sup> This was Bryan's least successful bill of the Twenty-eighth Legislature, and it died on the Speaker's table.

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 171-172.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 379.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 403.

In addition to the above bills, Bryan presented three petitions and memorials. Petitions and memorials are a method by which a legislator puts the ideas and beliefs of his constituents into the official legislative record. Such petitions and memorials make the legislator and the constituents look particularly impressive.

The first petition presented by Bryan was one favoring repeal of an occupation tax on merchants in Jones and Taylor counties. This petition was from the citizens of the concerned counties, but the petition had been originated and circulated by the merchants themselves. In addition, there was a third petition from Callahan county favoring the repeal of this same occupation tax on merchants. One of the reasons for this concern with an occupation tax was because of Senate Bill 122. This bill would have increased the merchants' occupation tax, and the merchants wanted to stop it before it was passed and became firmly entrenched.<sup>20</sup> However, no legislation resulted from it.

Bryan supported a Simple Resolution that provided for newspapers for the Confederate Home in Austin.<sup>21</sup> The home had been built and sustained for the veterans of the Confederacy, but it occasionally was subjected to neglect. The lack of newspapers is an example of this periodic neglect. Bryan's vote on this measure was a political gesture as well as a humane one.

---

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 397, 502.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 503.

In the First Called Session of the Twenty-eighth Legislature, Bryan did not present any bills, and he requested to be excused for part of the session because of "important business." He did join in the presentation of the House Concurrent Resolution number 3.<sup>22</sup> The resolution provided for a joint committee to be formed to investigate the penitentiary system, but the resolution was tabled and never put into effect.

Bryan continued the patterns that he had developed in the Twenty-seventh Legislature through the Twenty-eighth Legislature. He again presented five bills, but he did have greater success in getting his bills accepted by the legislature. He continued to exercise his preference to work behind the scenes, rather than in a more public manner.

It is evident that Bryan had caught the feelings and the desires of his constituents. He received written support from such prominent citizens as W. B. Worsham and W. H. Featherston of the bank at Henrietta, C. S. Bass of Abilene and numerous others.<sup>23</sup>

Further proof of Bryan's "team position" was the exchange between him and John H. Terrell, the Texas Land Commissioner in June, 1903. Terrell had heard reports of improprieties in land sales in Stanton in Martin County, 125 miles west of Abilene, and he asked Bryan to observe a sale and send him a report. Bryan reported

---

<sup>22</sup>Texas House Journal, 28th Legislature, 1st Called Session, (1903), p. 32.

<sup>23</sup>Letter from W. B. Worsham and W. H. Featherston of Henrietta Bank, February 7, 1903.

that he did not believe that the sale of public school land in Stanton was being handled properly or fairly. Terrell responded with a request that Bryan ask the Governor to reconvene the legislature in order to rectify the Stanton situation.<sup>24</sup> It is unlikely that Terrell would have made this request of a legislator of little influence. However, Bryan apparently did not comply with Terrell's request and no action was taken.

Another evidence of Bryan's growing prominence was the repeated attacks made on him by the editor of the Breckenridge Texian. If Bryan had been a nonentity, it is not likely that the editor would have taken notice of him. W. W. Kirk, a constituent of Roby, wrote a letter to Bryan referring to these editorial comments, and stated that he believed that it was a "plot to get" Bryan. Kirk further stated that the editor was failing to report Bryan's position on the land and quarantine bills.<sup>25</sup> This must have caused Bryan some concern as both issues were of importance in his district.

Kirk continued to show his concern for Bryan's political career by sending Bryan his evaluation of a Mr. Grogan. Grogan was said to have been Bryan's possible opponent if Bryan decided to run for the State Senate. Kirk said that Grogan would do "anything to win."<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup>Letter from John Terrell Commissioner of General Land Office, Austin, Texas, June 26, 1903.

<sup>25</sup>Letter from W. W. Kirk, Roby, Texas, August 3, 1903. During the years, when the state was selling millions of acres of public land, such legislation was important. Also important was legislation dealing with the cattle fever quarantine.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., October 4, 1903.

In early 1904 the first of two personal sorrows hit Bryan. His mother, Mrs. W. C. Bryan, of the Diamond-T Ranch died. It will be recalled that upon her death, she was hailed throughout the state and the southwest as one of the heroic women of the early days of Texas.<sup>27</sup> Her son was greatly affected by her death.

Bryan received a letter from B. R. Webb of the Fort Worth Telegram that had a two fold purpose. Webb was first seeking information on the death of Robert E. Lee's daughter and her reported burial on Phantom Hill. This indicates that Bryan had continued his interest in the history of this region, and that his knowledge had become well known. The second purpose was to assure Bryan of the Telegram's support in any political race that he might undertake.<sup>28</sup> This is further indication of Bryan's growing prominence in the Texas political sphere and suggests that he may have indicated an interest in a higher office.

Bryan was careful to keep his political fences in order, and he was always aware of his constituents' needs. He had requested that H. F. Foy be appointed Chairman of the Democratic Executive Committee for his district, but State Chairman Jim Wells had previously promised the appointment to another man. Wells wrote Bryan a letter assuring

---

<sup>27</sup> Chicago Tribune, "Death of a Texas Cattle Queen," (Spring, 1904).

<sup>28</sup> Letter from B. R. Webb of Ft. Worth Telegram, February 3, 1904. The tradition that Robert E. Lee was in command at Fort Phantom Hill in the 1850's is still widespread. He was commander at Camp Cooper, some thirty miles down the Clear Fork in 1856-57. No member of his family was buried in Texas.

him that it was only because of his previous commitment that he was unable to agree to Bryan's request.<sup>29</sup>

In mid-1904, the Taylor County News appealed to the people of Taylor and Jones counties to return Bryan to the Legislature. The News stated that Bryan had ably represented his district and that he deserved to be returned to office.<sup>30</sup>

In the election, Bryan won by a majority of almost two to one. He received 2,527 votes in Callahan, Jones, and Taylor counties, while Major J. D. McCamant, his opponent, received 1,520 votes. Bryan's victory was hailed by the Abilene Reporter as being a vote of confidence based on Bryan's two previous terms.<sup>31</sup>

When the Twenty-ninth Legislative Session convened in January, 1905, the House of Representatives selected F. W. Seabury as the Speaker. The session was saddened for Bryan when news came of the death of his father, Col. W. C. Bryan, in Abilene; Colonel Bryan died April 9, 1905. Representative Hancock presented a resolution of condolence expressing the sympathy of the House. The Resolution passed unanimously, and it was sent to the Bryan family.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup>Letter from James B. Wells, Chairman State Democratic Executive Committee, Brownsville, Texas, May 31, 1904.

<sup>30</sup>Taylor County News, July 9, 1904.

<sup>31</sup>Abilene Reporter, July 21, 1904.

<sup>32</sup>Texas House Journal, 29th Legislature, Regular Session (1905), p. 1173.

Joseph Weldon Bailey, then a rising and later controversial Texas politician, sent a personal letter of condolence.<sup>33</sup>

Bryan occupied a more prominent and important position in this session of the State Legislature than he had at any time previously. He was appointed to two investigative bodies that seemed important at the time. The first was convened to investigate the "erroneous enrollment of Section 129 of the General Election Law" passed at the First Called Session of the Twenty-ninth Legislature.<sup>34</sup> The second Committee was concerned with the "Beef Trust."<sup>35</sup> The latter was a body convened to evaluate the role of the meat packer in the beef industry. It is evident that Bryan had become a member of the House's ruling clique. He still was not before the public as much as some of his colleagues, but he did participate in the leadership councils.

Bryan undertook the task of presenting amendments to and substitutes for bills which were considered to be unacceptable to the legislative leadership. These amendments and substitutes included one providing for granting two elderly representatives the right to choose their own seats in the chamber and an amendment prohibiting electioneering within 100 feet of the polls.<sup>36</sup>

Again the pattern of absenteeism became more pronounced for Bryan in this legislative session. He requested permission to

---

<sup>33</sup>Letter from Joseph W. Bailey, 1905.

<sup>34</sup>Texas House Journal, 29th Legislature, 2nd Called Session (1906), pp. 66-67.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 609.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 1003.



be excused eight times during the regular session,<sup>37</sup> and only presented three bills for the consideration of the House.

House Bill number 407 authorized water, light, and gas plants to operate together.<sup>38</sup> This bill would have allowed utility companies to develop a monopoly in any given area or community. The bill was not readily accepted, and it died on the Speaker's table.

Bryan's House Bill number 461 was a "housekeeping bill" that would have legitimized all county records that predated January, 1882. The bill provided for the validity of said records, if they had been in continued county possession during this entire period.<sup>39</sup> The bill was necessary because of inadequate record keeping procedures that many counties had followed, especially frontier counties. The bill did not become a law.

Bryan's third bill, House Bill number 514, conferred certain authority on revenue agents to require county officials to give them any information they deemed appropriate, but the bill died on the Speaker's table.<sup>40</sup>

During the First Called Session of the Twenty-ninth Legislature, Bryan further solidified his position within the leadership circles of the State House when he presented a simple resolution

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 325, 341, 353, 360, 822, 1171, 1216.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 297.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 392.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 466-467.

appreciation of Speaker Seabury.<sup>41</sup> Such a resolution was always presented by a member of the leader's supporting clique. In addition, Bryan sat in for Speaker Seabury on one occasion during the First Called Session; thus continuing a practice that had begun during the regular session. The Speaker used selected lieutenants, in order to transact the business of the House when he might be physically absent. Bryan, also, requested permission to be excused on one occasion during the First Called Session.

During the Second Called Session of the Twenty-ninth Legislature, he continued his association with the leadership clique. It was during this Called Session that he began his investigation of the election laws.

During the Twenty-ninth Legislature, Bryan continued his progress as a state office holder by aligning himself with the ruling order of the body. He was named to several important committees and he was selected as the chairman of the Public Lands Committee. He was chosen to be a member of two investigative bodies, and he had been selected to be a member of the welcoming party for President Theodore Roosevelt.<sup>42</sup>

Bryan had embarked on a scheduled program of political progress, and he was on "schedule." His progress, though not notecoric, was steady. As an example of his growing prominence, The Chicago Examiner decided to feature him as a symbol of the Texas

---

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 729.

committee to investigate the Beef Trust. They requested his picture, so that it might run in conjunction with the article.<sup>43</sup>

An example of the high regard that Bryan was held in is found in the letter from H. B. Smoot of Dallas. Then, as now, people wished to associate themselves with prominent politicians. Smoot had heard that Bryan had plans to open a new Abilene bank and Smoot wished to invest in it.<sup>44</sup> There was no such plan, and Bryan responded courteously to Smoot. A former Texas A. & M. Professor, James Hays Quarles, who was the librarian and baseball coach, wanted Bryan to speak to his team when the team was in Austin.<sup>45</sup> Apparently he did not accept that honor.

Bryan received a letter from J. Larmon, who was the former owner of the Merkel Mail stating that he believed that Bryan had an "expanding future."<sup>46</sup> Other such letters could be cited. Bryan's erstwhile booster, Kirk from Roby, wrote a letter of praise and asked Bryan's help in getting a free railroad pass.<sup>47</sup> Kirk was following the accepted procedure in applying to Bryan for assistance in getting the pass because of Bryan's association and support of the railroads.

In 1906, there was an increasing number of endorsements from public and private sources of Bryan's political career. The Merkel Mail and The Abilene Reporter endorsed Bryan for the Legislature and J. F. Cunningham

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 609.

<sup>44</sup> Letter from H. B. Smoot, Dallas, April 17, 1905.

<sup>45</sup> Letter from James Hays Quarles, A. & M. Librarian, 1905.

<sup>46</sup> Letter from Editor J. Larmon, Ft. Worth, January 22, 1905.

<sup>47</sup> Letter from Kirk, Roby, Texas, February 2, 1905.

for Congress. Other rumors pertaining to Bryan included the Austin Daily Tribune's report that he was going to Congress.<sup>48</sup>

Charles A. Walsh, the National Democratic Committeeman from Iowa, wrote asking Bryan's opinion of the national political scene. Much of the letter consists of raillery against New Yorkers and Easterners.<sup>49</sup> The letter indicates beyond a doubt that the Abilene legislator was coming to be known in high political circles.

When the Thirtieth Legislature opened in January, 1907, Bryan supported the selection of Thomas B. Love as the House Speaker. This continued his record as a perceptive man who was able to sense the proper direction to turn. In addition, Bryan took what many people thought might be a potentially dangerous political position when he agreed to second the nomination of Joseph W. Bailey for the United States Senate.<sup>50</sup> Bailey was then and continued to be for some years the central figure in a rancorous controversy. As congressman and senator he had attained renown, but it was brought out that he had become associated with the Waters Pierce Oil Company, a branch of the Standard Oil Trust; and many reform-minded Texans opposed him bitterly. Bryan believed that Bailey had not done anything dishonorable and stood by him loyally. This course was profitable politically, for during the next two or three years Bailey's

---

<sup>48</sup> Austin Daily Tribune, 1906.

<sup>49</sup> Letter from Charles A. Walsh, National Democratic Committeeman, Iowa, January 18, 1906.

<sup>50</sup> Texas House Journal, 30th Legislature, Regular Session, (1907), p. 156.

influence prevailed in Texas politics. For instance, Bailey decreed that no anti-Bailey man should represent the Democratic Party in the national nominating convention of 1908, and in that decision he was victorious. Again, Bryan was found to have been most perceptive in choosing to support Bailey. It was a wise decision, particularly since Bryan had political ambitions.

Bryan continued to act for the House leadership in the presentation of amendments and substitutes. During the Regular Thirtieth Legislature, 1907, he presented some thirteen amendments and substitutes. The first was an amendment to allow Senator Bailey to respond in person before the legislature to some of his legislative attackers. Another important amendment was designed to control lobbyist influence in the legislature.<sup>51</sup> It cannot be said that Bryan presented any simple or unimportant amendments during this session. Each amendment had a serious and possibly an important purpose for the entire state of Texas. The only partisan amendment was for the establishment of two A. & M. experimental stations in the West Texas Staked Plains and irrigated section.<sup>52</sup> Unlike most of Bryan's amendments, this one failed to be adopted.

The increasingly close relationship between Bryan and the railroads is illustrated in a bill he presented to the House. House Bill number 27 was to have relieved the railroads of responsibility if they had failed to build any roads that had been agreed upon. The position rested on the supposition that the railroads were hard pressed financially and that to

---

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 319.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 1344.

compel the laying of more track would not be in the public interest. Many of the railroads had agreed to build so many miles of rails in exchange for concessions. At that time, however, the railroads were under pressure to return all concessions that they had not earned. The bill was replaced by House Bill number 28 of a similar nature which was later rejected.<sup>53</sup>

Bryan's House Bill number 40 was a local bill for his district. The bill incorporated the Baird Independent School District with its own board of trustees.<sup>54</sup> It passed without opposition, and it was enrolled.

The Abilene representative co-sponsored a bill for the purpose of prohibiting the introduction of Johnson grass in areas where it was not previously in existence. Obviously such a law would have been difficult to enforce, and the bill was rejected. House Bill number 310, which was also sponsored by Bryan, failed. The purpose of the bill was to define public stockyards and the responsibility of their operators.<sup>55</sup> Bryan's fellow ranchmen apparently favored it to protect and secure their investment in their cattle. However, the rank and file voters and legislators were indifferent to the measure, and the lobbyists succeeded in killing it.

Bryan tried to pass another cattle shippers' bill in House Bill number 490. The bill would have favored the rancher and the cattlemen by providing security while cattle were shipped to market and the

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., House Bill 27.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., House Bill 40.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., House Bill 302.

stockyards. It died on the Speaker's table.<sup>56</sup> During this session Bryan requested that he be excused on only four occasions. His attendance record was improving. He did manage to secure the passage of two resolutions. The first required a certain printing of bills. The second invited the Honorable Joseph W. Bailey, United States Senator, to speak to the State Legislature.<sup>57</sup> This was important to the friends and supporters of Bailey. It would give the United States Senator a chance to answer charges against himself.

During the First Called Session of the Thirtieth Legislature, Bryan was more active than he usually was during called sessions. He did not request permission to be absent during the session. He presented two amendments to bills being considered by the House. The first was to amend House Bill number 7 to include a law regulating corporations with \$10,000 or more in circulation. The second amendment that he presented was to amend House Bill number 67, which was calculated to protect the hereditary rights to school and asylum land that had been bought from the state.<sup>58</sup>

During the Called Session, Bryan presented three bills to be considered by the House. House Bill number 64 provided for the adoption of a uniform set of school textbooks.<sup>59</sup> This farsighted proposal met with little acceptance, and the bill was later killed in its committee.

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., House Bill 490.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 680.

<sup>58</sup> Texas House Journal, 30th Legislature, 1st Called Session, (1907), p. 185.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

His House Bill number 71 was to divide and patent certain public lands.<sup>60</sup> The bill was similar to Bryan's amendment to House Bill number 67. It was of great interest to people in Bryan's district. House Bill number 85 was presented by Bryan to "give the Railroad Commission the right to fix fares and rates on the railroads."<sup>61</sup> The bill died on the Speaker's table, as did House Bill number 71. Bryan presented a Simple Resolution to establish a commission of three to investigate the lowering of railroad freight rates.

At the end of the Thirtieth Legislature, Bryan was described in the House Journal as: "W. J. Bryan, Abilene--Absolutely indifferent as to consequences. Beat him if you think best, but don't dictate. He knows the wants of his district and of the State."<sup>62</sup> This is no small compliment to the veteran West Texas legislator. It aptly described one who works behind the scenes.

While the non-political life of the veteran lawmaker proceeded in uneventful fashion, he spent a part of 1907 defending his record on the cattle industry. He was particularly concerned that his constituents be apprised of what he considered to be his accomplishments. It will be recalled that he had sponsored a bill to permit the shipping of cattle from below the Texas fever tick quarantine zone to points north of it at certain seasons without requiring that they be dipped, provided the cattle were kept in pens for observation for a period. The cattlemen of

---

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 424.



North Texas, especially of the Panhandle which was tick-free objected to the proposal strenuously. Bryan probably never expected to secure the enactment of his bill, but his presenting it focused attention on the problem and brought about the establishment of federally approved and controlled dipping vats, where cattle after being dipped could be shipped or driven across the quarantine line into tick-free regions. Thus Bryan claimed that at least half of what he had been contending for had been put into effect.<sup>63</sup>

It was in 1908 after the Thirtieth Legislature adjourned that Bryan determined the time had arrived for him to move up politically. J. S. Ainsworth endorsed Bryan in the Hamlin Herald by writing, "Great is Bryan--I served with him one term in the house--very influential."<sup>64</sup>

It is worth repeating that in 1908 the "Bailey question" was at white heat in Texas. United States Senator Joseph Weldon Bailey had been charged with corrupt dealings by way of taking fees from H. Clay Pierce of the Waters-Pierce Oil Company, a subsidiary of the Standard Oil Company, a trust. After a rancorous contest the legislature reelected the senator by an overwhelming vote, even while a legislative investigating committee was studying the political ethics of the colorful Senator. It will be recalled that Bailey determined to dominate the Democratic Party in Texas and declared that none but Bailey men should go to the national nominating convention. Both the Bailey and the anti-Bailey forces organized and

---

<sup>63</sup> Letter from Harry Tom King, Abilene, April 3, 1906.

<sup>64</sup> Hamlin Herald, Article by J. S. Ainsworth after the 30th Legislature adjourned.

waged a contest of heat and bitterness that has rarely been equalled in the annals of the state.

W. J. Bryan did not like strife; rancor and vituperation were not in his disposition. Still, he was not able to keep out of the Bailey fight. He was the Senator's friend and apologist. He was called on to raise money in Taylor County in Bailey's behalf, and likely he served in that connection.<sup>65</sup>

He received a letter from William Reagan of Palo Pinto inquiring as to how he stood on "Baileyism." The astute politician had to take a stand. His position on Bailey and Baileyism were well known already, but his reply was as bland as could have been made: "I supported Bailey for the United States Senate, and I will expect him to live up to it."<sup>66</sup>

As a part of the continuing and developing interest in Bryan's political career, the Fort Worth Record requested his photograph immediately by telegraph. He sent it, no doubt. In April, 1908, Bryan received a letter from N. H. Brown, Professor of Physics and Electrical Engineering, of Texas A. & M. desiring Bryan's presence as the commencement speaker.<sup>67</sup> He did not make the commencement address. Bryan received another letter from T. N. Jones of Tyler encouraging Bryan to greater efforts for Bailey. He reminded Bryan that if he failed to carry Taylor county for Bailey, Bryan might get some opposition himself.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup>Letter from T. N. Jones, Tyler, Texas, March 2, 1908.

<sup>66</sup>Letter from William Reagan, Palo Pinto, March 9, 1908.

<sup>67</sup>Letter from N. H. Brown, April 7, 1908.

<sup>68</sup>Letter from T. N. Jones, April 19, 1908.

Bryan continued to receive both praise and vitriol. C. U. Connel-  
lee wrote him saying that he was impressed with Bryan's political circular,  
but he wanted to know his stand on prohibition. Bryan responded by saying,  
"I shall vote for submission of the constitutional amendment to be voted  
on by the people."<sup>69</sup> The brevity of this reply is a measure of his  
political wisdom. Connellee, an influential pioneer citizen of Eastland,  
opposed prohibition; but thousands of Bryan's constituents favored it,  
many of them making of it a veritable fetish. Bryan did not dare vote  
against it, but in discussing the subject or writing to such a man as  
Connellee, he would give a good old democratic answer; let the people de-  
cide. This was the beginning of Bryan's plans to go to the State Senate.

---

<sup>69</sup>Letter written by Bryan in answer to C. U. Connellee's letter,  
June 30, 1908.

### CHAPTER III

#### State Senator

In the Democratic primary of 1908, Bryan easily defeated his opponent, R. C. Crane a Sweetwater lawyer, and he was elected to the State Senate in November. His district consisted of Palo Pinto, Stephens, Eastland, Callahan, Taylor, Nolan, Mitchell, Howard, Martin, Andrews, Glasscock, Midland, Ector, Winkler, Loving, Ward, Crane, Upton, Gaines, Yoakum, Terry, Lynn, Dawson, Borden, Garza, Kent, Scurry, Fisher, Stonewall, Haskell, Jones, and Shackelford counties.<sup>1</sup> It included what today is commonly called the Big Country and much additional territory extending westward to New Mexico.

Bryan presented fourteen bills during his first regular session in the State Senate in 1909, but the number does not represent any marked increase in public positions taken by him. He now had thirty-two and not three or four counties to represent. In fact, his bill presentation, considering the area he represented, was one-third of his average bill presentation per session in the House of Representatives.

Bryan's first effort was Senate Bill number 4, to establish a west Texas Normal College under direction of the State Board of Education.<sup>2</sup> The bill died on the Senate Calender, but it strengthened the

---

<sup>1</sup>Texas Senate Journal, 31st Legislature, January 12, 1909.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

general interest in establishing such a school. Then he introduced Senate Bill number 19 to allow the State Penitentiary to establish a plant to make cotton bagging. The bill was enrolled but was not enacted.<sup>3</sup>

Senate Bill number 67 was a local bill, and it passed without contest, reorganizing the Thirty-second, Sixty-third, Thirty-fourth, Thirty-ninth, and creating the Sixty-eighth judicial districts.<sup>4</sup> Bryan revived his anti-transportation of Johnson grass bill, but it was a failure. He co-sponsored Senate Bill number 112. The bill, a woman's rights measure, provided for the protection and freedom of a married woman's income and private property.<sup>5</sup> It was an anti-community property bill, and it died on the Senate Calendar.

Bryan's Senate Bill number 129 was extremely controversial. Its purpose was the same as that of one of Bryan's House bills. Some railroads, in their eagerness to secure favorable locations and public lands during the late years of the Nineteenth Century, had committed themselves to construct mileage beyond their financial ability and mileage that was not needed.<sup>6</sup> In promoting the measure Bryan took the unpopular side. The public generally was demanding the building of more railroads. This bill, which was of great importance to Bryan's railroad supporters, died in the House. It might be said that Bryan had come close to guaranteeing his political future by protecting the railroad concessions. On the other

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

hand, there was great hostility toward the railroads in the rank and file of voters; so the lawmaker may have had more to lose than to gain. With the exception of a local bill dealing with the Baird Independent School District, the other Bryan bills died on the Calender or in committee.<sup>7</sup>

Bryan presented Senate Joint Resolution number 6 which was to amend Article 11, Sections 4 and 5 of the Texas State Constitution. The Joint Resolution provided for incorporation of all cities and towns with populations of five thousand or more.<sup>8</sup> It passed in full, and it was submitted to the voters. The voters did not adopt it, however, Bryan continued his practice of presenting amendments to bills that had a good chance of passing.

Bryan's first session in the State Senate must be judged as a success. Even though it was not enacted, the progress of the railroad bill itself would sustain that evaluation. He was not yet exerting the level of influence that he had in the House, but that would come with time. He had established himself in the Senate and had started what would be considered a good relationship with Lieutenant Governor Davidson.

While a member of the legislature, the Senator had continued his interest in the cattlemen and their association. In 1909, he was chosen as a delegate from Texas to the International Cattlemen's Convention.<sup>9</sup> Because of his continuing interest in ranching he did attend the convention. About or during this time he was making an addition to his Abilene

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 325.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 254.

<sup>9</sup> An untitled and undated manuscript by W. A. Bowen.

building; and someone, possibly one of the workers, left a one-half flask of Apple Brandy in the foundation. The flask was found intact when workmen were doing some excavating in Abilene, where prohibition prevailed. They took the flask to Bryan.<sup>10</sup> He was abstemious and could meet the standards of ardent prohibitionists in the matter of drinking, but a bottle of liquor found on his premises could have been embarrassing.

Bryan was commended by numerous civic and community organizations on his first Senate session. One of his Baird constituents wrote asking him to check on the charges against the son of a Baird couple. The Baird constituent was trying to help the humiliated parents.<sup>11</sup> The results of his efforts are not revealed in his correspondence.

The Banner's editorial in 1910 highly praised Bryan for his political efforts, and the publication endorsed him. The editorial also pointed out that he had been instrumental in the saving of Joseph W. Bailey by the presentation of a psychologically timed motion that Bailey be invited to address the legislature.<sup>12</sup> Politicians, like persons in other fields of endeavor, were taking note of psychology at this time. The impact of Sigmund Freud's and later Carl Jung's ideas were affecting the future of Texas politics. Some of the other current tales about Bryan include: Bryan was one of the first A. & M. (1878) graduates, he was considered to

---

<sup>10</sup> Reporter News, 1909.

<sup>11</sup> Letter, October 4, 1909.

<sup>12</sup> Banner Editorial, 1910, Fort Worth.

be the tallest State Senator, and he was the first person from Taylor county to wear a "boiled" shirt.<sup>13</sup>

The veteran legislator received a letter from A. A. Clarke, a railroad attorney, inveigling against any moralist legislation that might be presented by the Governor, Thomas M. Campbell. Clarke believed that the State of Texas was approaching an ecclesiastical despotism.<sup>14</sup> Bryan's reply to this letter is not extant, but it was discreet no doubt and did not contain any commitment. Bob Barker, the secretary of the State Senate, liked to tell of a Bryan experience down through the years. The story was:

Bryan was travelling through the country in his car when it became stuck in the mud. A farmer assisted him by pulling the car out of the mud. Bryan did not have any cash or checks with him, so he told the farmer to drop by his Abilene office for reimbursement. The farmer agreed to do this, and he asked Bryan's name, and was told W. J. Bryan. The farmer found this to be a poor joke; and he said to Bryan, 'Well, if you're ever out here again look me up. My name is Theodore Roosevelt.'<sup>15</sup>

It will be recalled that at that time William Jennings Bryan was perhaps the best known private citizen in America. This confusion with the "Great Orator of the Plains" continued to happen to Bryan for many years. One must assume that he enjoyed the confusion, else why would he consistently use his initials W. J. Bryan when he had been known previously as John Bryan? Bryan's favorite quotation during this period of his life was:

Tis always morning somewhere and also  
above the awakening continents, from

---

<sup>13</sup> Clipping date of Golden Wedding Anniversary (May 31, 1942) periodical unknown.

<sup>14</sup> Letter from A. A. Clarke, August 19, 1910.

<sup>15</sup> Abilene Reporter-News, March 5, 1941.



shore to shore, somewhere the birds  
are singing evermore.<sup>16</sup>

The quotation seems to catch the hopes and dreams of a man who was more romantic than he admitted, even to himself. The decade of 1911-20 was a period of sadness for Bryan, but it was also one of achievement. Bryan had come into his own as a man and as a leader. He had planned his political career, and he had remained true to his plan. At this point, one would have to say that his career had just begun, and that he could look forward to even greater success and rewards. W. J. Bryan was a "man to be reckoned with in Texas politics."

When the Thirty-second Legislature opened in January, 1911, Bryan found himself at the point of realizing many of his political aims. His mind was set upon running for a Federal office. Virtually all of his actions in the Senate were slanted so as to prepare for such a campaign.

Therefore, on January 17, 1911, the beginning of the legislative session, he was able to arrange his appointment to the twelve committees which he felt would be most likely to be of help to him in his political aspirations. They were the committees of Contingent Expenses, Internal Improvements, Constitutional Amendments, Military Affairs, Counties and County Boundaries, Federal Relations, State Asylums, Stock and Stock Raising, Agricultural Affairs, Mining and Irrigation, Labor and Senatorial Redistricting.<sup>17</sup> He served as chairman of the State Asylum's Committee which placed him in a position to directly influence affairs relating to

---

<sup>16</sup> Quotations Selected by Abilene People, compiled by Ladies of Cemetary Association, 1905, p. 32.

<sup>17</sup> Texas Senate Journal, 32nd Legislature (1911).

his district. Also it allowed him to continue to build a statewide structure of political influence.<sup>18</sup> Bryan was no longer subjected to the ridicule that he was a provincial politician.

The West Texas Legislator presented seventeen bills as sponsor or co-sponsor. He continued to show the greatest interest in those questions and affairs that directly affected his district and constituents. Of his proposals affecting the state at large, Senate Bill number 1 was for the purpose of appropriating \$25,000 in special funds to strengthen law enforcement. Another was his Senate Bill number 6 which was to control the licenses and the hours that liquor dealers could be open.<sup>19</sup> Neither bill passed, but they provided him with certain political issues which he could raise in the forthcoming campaigns for Federal office.

The first Bryan bill to pass during the session was Senate Bill number 17. It was a local bill that allowed the Nolan county commissioners power over the county roads.<sup>20</sup> His Senate Bill number 23 attempted to establish a cotton goods manufacturing plant at the East Texas Penetentiary. It is worth noting that this was a pioneer proposal to establish an industry at the prison, with less emphasis on farming. The Bill passed, but it was vetoed by the Governor.<sup>21</sup> In his Senate Bill number 31, he returned to a cause that he had long supported, the railroads. The bill provided that railroads would not lose their charters for failure to make repairs

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 297.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

and build track that they had committed to build. Several Texas railroads had made commitments to construct additional mileage and they were threatened with the loss of their charters for their failure to do so. There was abundant evidence that in some cases the building of additional mileage was economically unfeasible. In other cases, the railroads were in such a condition due to the panic of 1907 and the economic doldrums that followed as to make additional construction impossible. This law which relieved them of their obligations was a great boon to them. The act was unpopular in the communities that were adversely affected by it, and Bryan's championship of it was an act of political courage. The Bill was the culmination of ten years of railroad legislation on the part of Bryan.<sup>22</sup> It passed and became a law.

In his Senate Bill number 37 the West Texas legislator again proposed to establish a Normal College in Abilene, but it failed. Again Bryan took an unpopular position when he presented Senate Bill number 52. It would have allowed unpaid taxes to become a lien on personal property. The bill would have changed the very basis of the Texas homesteading laws, and it was unpopular and an obvious political hazard.<sup>23</sup> One must speculate on Bryan's taking these essentially unpopular positions in light of his personal political aspirations. His friends regarded him as courageous in standing by his convictions; critics alleged no doubt that he was courting the support of big business and wealthy people.

---

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

Another bill presented by the veteran legislator, Senate Bill number 89, dealt with the contracts between railroads and newspapers. The bill was so written as to favor the railroads at the expense of the newspapers. The bill passed the Senate, but it died in the House.<sup>24</sup>

Bryan involved himself in the growing controversy over alcoholic beverages and he presented Senate bills 204 and 205. The bills provided for the prohibition of the sales of alcoholic beverages on other than a local option basis. This would have removed from the legislature the power and authority to determine for the state the legality of the sales of alcoholic beverages. Both bills, however, died in the House.<sup>25</sup>

His Senate Bill number 277 provided for the prohibition of the sale of alcoholic beverages within ten miles of the University of Texas.<sup>26</sup> Such an act, which would have closed saloons in Austin and the vicinity, provoked sharp opposition and did not make any progress of consequence. A similar law, prohibiting the sale of liquor in the vicinity of military camps, was enacted during World War I.

In his Senate Bill number 303 the Tall Texan proposed a law which was of real importance to his district and part of the state. It provided for the uniformity, validity, and acceptability of all existing county records which predated January 1, 1882.<sup>27</sup> The bill was particularly

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 320.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 514.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 587.

important in the newer parts of the state since many of their records were informal and not prepared in the accepted manner. The measure did not become a law.

The last bill presented in the regular session of the Thirty-second legislature was an important and far reaching measure. Senate Bill number 317 provided for the adoption of uniform public school text books, a pioneering proposal in the field of education.<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, the bill died in the House, probably as a result of an active campaign by publishing firms to kill it. This was the West Texan's greatest success in this area.

It was during the session that Bryan took a basic philosophical position. He maintained that it was improper for a state legislative body to pass a resolution dealing with Federal matters.<sup>29</sup> His position was symptomatic of the position taken before and after by numerous parties as representative of their beliefs in states' rights and responsibilities.

During the regular session, Bryan presented a series of petitions to the state Senate. One of them was for the repeal of the law which provided for a license fee to peddle drugs from wagons in Taylor county.<sup>30</sup> His proposal was opposed by druggists and other merchants, and it was not enacted. Another petition would have made it a misdemeanor to give a

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 659.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 857.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

check on "no account" or "insufficient funds."<sup>31</sup> This obviously was a merchants and bankers proposal, and it did not receive enough support from the general public to gain acceptance. The third petition proposed to do away with Sunday fairs, shows, races, hunting, fishing, sports, and excursions.<sup>32</sup> It was a "blue law" which was popular with many church people at that time; but it lacked appeal to the rank and file of Texans. One wonders why Bryan introduced it; notwithstanding his interest in religion, he was not and never had been a "church man." It is difficult to imagine his having such a measure at heart. It is obvious that he was making an appeal to a large political element as many pious church members supported the idea with enthusiasm. In their opinion the author of such a bill was bound to be a great and good leader. His reply to the charges of opportunism might well be that the measure did not pass, and that nobody was hurt by it.

Generally speaking, it was a successful legislative session for Bryan, even though he failed to attract a normal college for Abilene. To some measure he did develop further status and prestige as a legislator throughout his district and the state.

During the legislative session of 1911, the West Texan had received a letter from R. C. Roberdeau of the Austin American National Bank requesting assistance in the collection of a \$90 check that had been written by a well-known Abilenian that had been returned as uncollectable.<sup>33</sup> There

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 253.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 228.

<sup>33</sup> Letter from R. C. Roberdeaux, Austin American National Bank, March 23, 1911.

was little that Bryan could do in this matter, but he did contact the involved individual. Bryan's friends frequently sought his assistance in West Texas. He aided them when he was able to do so, but there was little that he could do in many instances.

By mid August, 1911, there was a growing movement to support the Tall Texan in a Congressional race. A J. B. Zachary of Hamlin sent a blanket statement of support by letter.<sup>34</sup> Bryan received a similar letters from Dr. L. W. Hollis and C. R. Buchanan offering such blanket support.<sup>35</sup> No doubt other commitments would have been forthcoming save for the fact that a condition arose causing Bryan to close his mind against the idea.

As the year 1912 approached, the veteran legislator began to increase his position statements. The position declarations dealt with the same issues that he had emphasized on a state basis. They included questions about ranching, agriculture, railroads, and other familiar topics.

Though it was widely believed that Bryan had been a member of the "immortal forty" in the 1912 presidential election, he did not participate in either the state or the national democratic conventions.<sup>36</sup> He was not a member of the "immortal forty."

---

<sup>34</sup>Letter from J. B. Zachary, Hamlin, August 13, 1911.

<sup>35</sup>Letters from L. W. Hollis, San Antonio, August 23, 1911, and C. R. Buchanan, January 22, 1912.

<sup>36</sup>Abilene Reporter, August, 1912, page unknown.

Early 1912 brought the Security and Navarro Refining Company case of 1909 and Standard Oil. The contention centered on the monopolistic tendencies of Standard. W. H. Gray, who had authored a pamphlet on the issue, solicited the West Texan's opinion.<sup>37</sup> Any response would have great political implications. Bryan gave a circumspect response. Such a response was at conflict with his professed populist tendencies. For all his claims, Bryan remained true to his class and background.

July, 1912, the Tall Texan received a letter from Kendrick, of Wyoming who had participated in the Baltimore convention. Kendrick told of his political plans, and he asked Bryan about Bryan's plans.<sup>38</sup> This is another example of political associations beyond Bryan's immediate area. He was moving to a realization of his political hopes and plans.

---

<sup>37</sup>Letter from W. H. Gray, Houston, February 17, 1912.

<sup>38</sup>Letter from J. B. Kendrick, Sheridan, Wyoming, July 16, 1912.



## CHAPTER IV

### A Political Career Is Ended

William John Bryan was now ready to begin his next political move. He had confided his plans for a Congressional race to close associates. He had spent thirteen years following what was a carefully organized and coordinated campaign that led to Washington. All was ready; then an accident changed his life!

On Sunday, August 18, 1912, W. J. Bryan suffered a severe injury from a fall. For a man who had spent a great deal of his life on a ranch with the hazards that go with "topping" bronchos, roping and throwing cattle, and doing a dozen other tasks that endanger life and limb, the accident that almost took his life was ironic. A wire on the ranch fence was broken at a point where the fence reached a sheer bluff ten feet high. Bryan and a hand were making the minor repair when the ranchman lost his balance and fell from the top of the bluff onto the rock below.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to general bruises from head to foot, two ribs were broken and there was a brain concussion. He was carried quickly to a doctor at Hamlin. His brother-in-law, Judge K. K. Legett hastened him by automobile from Abilene to Hamlin and immediately made arrangements to send the injured man to Abilene by train. The last part of the journey,

---

<sup>1</sup>Abilene Reporter, August 19, 1912.

from Anson to Abilene, was made by a special train supplied by the Wichita Valley Railroad. A crowd of friends met the train on its arrival in Abilene exactly twelve hours after the accident.<sup>2</sup> For the first day or two, the doctors apparently doubted that Mr. Bryan would survive. Word to return home was sent to his sons, Bernard and W. J. Jr., who were attending school at Culver Military Academy in Culver, Indiana.<sup>3</sup> He soon recovered from his comatose condition, however, but his general recovery was slow. Indeed, the effects of the accident remained with him to the end of his life.

When word of the Bryan injury reached the newspapers, there was an immediate deluge of correspondence inquiring as to his condition. The two sons arrived at home during the shower of inquiries. Telegrams and letters of sympathy and solicitude that followed the United Press report of the Senator's injury is truly impressive. W. J. Bryan had a host of friends, many of them people of stature. Will T. Mayes, who would soon be lieutenant governor, expressed keen regret of the accident and delight at the reports of the Senator's improvement.<sup>4</sup> A similar message came from Governor Colquitt through his secretary J. T. Bowman. John W. Hornsby, noted Austin lawyer, expressed deep regret, as did R. E. Cofer professor of law at the University of Texas Law School. Joseph Weldon Bailey, Ike

---

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Letter from Commandant Greiner, Culver Military Academy, August 19, 1912.

<sup>4</sup>Letter from Will T. Mayes, Austin, August, 1912.

T. Pryor (a former Texas cattleman, now living in Kansas City), and a score of other prominent persons took notice of the misfortune.<sup>5</sup>

During this period many more endorsements of the Bryan candidacy for Congress, the governorship and various other offices appeared. Superficially, things appeared to be proceeding normally. It was a false assumption. With his returning consciousness, Bryan began to re-examine his life and plans.<sup>6</sup>

This period of re-examination was an extremely significant one in his life. Here was a man who had predicated his life on a public or political career and achievements. Now he was calling into question the very goal which he had established and lived by during four decades. His thoughts and energies had been given to politics with its corresponding power and influence. He was not an invalid, but henceforth he would have to reckon with physical impairment and the burden of politics would be too great. Thus he turned from his ambitions of the years and became increasingly concerned about life and its meaning. Though he did not become a religious man in the sense of church attendance, he did begin to think about man and his origin. He and his friends corresponded at length on this topic. Ironically he continued to hide this side of his nature from many people by assuming a knowing attitude in matters spiritual while he privately sought satisfaction and assurance.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Letters from Bowman, Hornsby, Cofer, Bailey, Pryor, and others, August, September, 1912.

<sup>6</sup> Bryan later stated to Dr. Rupert N. Richardson that this was a period during which he revalued his personal priorities. Interview with Dr. Rupert N. Richardson, July, 1971.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

His change in life style did not mean that Bryan was no longer influential. He had worked too long and well for his influence to be eroded by one unfortunate experience. It would be another decade and one-half before he would become truly a man on the political sidelines. Before the accident, he had indicated that he would not be a candidate for reelection to the State Senate, stating that he was retiring from politics for the time being.<sup>8</sup> Obviously he had intended to run for Congress when the time seemed propitious.

One item that Bryan later pointed to with pride was the establishment of the Epileptic Colony at Abilene. This state installation was of far greater importance than the economic contribution that it made to the Abilene area. It signified Abilene's position as the major center of the Big Country. It was a recognition of the preeminence and dominance of Abilene in this new and developing region. Although it cannot be said that his efforts brought the institution into existence, he did lead in setting it into operation.<sup>9</sup>

During his legislative career Bryan had exhibited a continuing interest in education that was exemplified but not limited to his campaign to establish a normal college in Abilene. One of his more impressive legislative efforts was the introduction of a bill to provide free textbooks for public school students. Though he was not greatly successful, he did view himself as an educational pioneer.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Abilene Reporter-News, Interview with Bryan, undated with no page number, (probably 1941 or 1942).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

The third area that Bryan prided himself on was with the agricultural sector. He repeatedly presented bills to open the West of the state to the farmer. In order to facilitate the opening of the West, he supported a modification of the absolute lease law.<sup>11</sup> Under the absolute lease law cattlemen or other lessors could continue with land leases indefinitely, preventing the state lands from being offered for sale. Continuence of the absolute lease law would have hindered, if not precluded, the westward expansion of the farmer. Again it was a most favorable feature of Bryan's legislative impact in the state legislature.

Another Bryan interest was in the area of eliminating the bucket shop cotton gamblers.<sup>12</sup> These individuals, through the use of high pressure techniques, would manipulate both the cotton buyers and the cotton prices. These activities led to many innocent people's losing their savings in bucket shop operations. Even though the Tall Texan did not initiate the legislation, he did support it actively.

One of the great problems of Bryan's time was the blacklisting of laborers. Texas' infant and developing industry utilized this method to keep the laborers cheap and "in line." When a man got a reputation as a trouble-maker, he became unemployable. Then, as now, the populist and progressive elements were speaking out against this "inhumane" practice. Bryan generally sided with the factions that were on the side of the

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

laborer.<sup>13</sup> These people were the forerunners of the movement for fair labor practices in our own day.

Throughout his legislative career the West Texan enjoyed a very close relationship with the railroads. Most of his efforts were supportive of the railroad position. There is nothing to indicate that he ever received favors from the railroads and the conclusion is warranted that he believed that the prosperity of the railroads served the public interest. He did, however, favor legislation compelling the railroads to offer good services. This is indicated by his efforts in the area of compelling adequate siding maintenance.<sup>14</sup> He presented and supported a siding and switchlight law. The purpose of which was to clearly identify sidings in both the daytime and nighttime. By requiring adequate siding and lighting, it was possible to avoid wrecks of railroads in situations where visibility would be affected. This safety measure was not popular with the railroads because of the expense of such an operation.

Another populist position that the West Texan took pride in was supporting a bill to control or eliminate money lenders such as those charging as much as ten percent a month on small loans.<sup>15</sup> The laborer and the small farmer were particularly vulnerable to this type of operator. This populist position has been a continuing battle against those entrenched moneyed interests who would take advantage of the less fortunate citizens. In our own day the continued conflict of easy money and hard money is

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

exemplified by the continuing efforts of Congressman Wright Patman and the 1973 Texas legislative session. Bryan felt that it would have been reprehensible to assume any other position with relation to the "money sharks."

Bryan had also supported bills to eliminate the legal representation of public service corporations by public officials.<sup>16</sup> This is a continuing problem into the 1970's in such cases as the Vesco-Watergate case. The elimination of such representation would remove one opportunity for the corruption of the public official.

As did many of the legislators of Bryan's day and later, he supported a more complete and comprehensive public road system.<sup>17</sup> The roads are the life blood of the rural and agricultural areas. Bryan's efforts dealt with the creation of road systems in his districts, but he did offer support for similar efforts in other parts of the state.

Bryan claimed a measure of credit for the success of the prohibition movement in later years, citing his efforts in eliminating the serving of whiskey on railroads while they were passing through dry counties, supporting the constitutional amendment for prohibition and the elimination and control of open gambling houses.<sup>18</sup> It must be said, however, that these claims were made in retrospect. The record indicates that although he supported these measures, he later exaggerated the weight of his influence in bringing them about. For instance, he did not oppose

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

prohibition, but he did not involve himself in the prohibition movement. It is possible that his pride in this area was encouraged by later events that saw prohibition sweep the state and country.

For all of Bryan's pride, his record as a legislator was not an extraordinary one. He was not an outspoken leader in the House or Senate, and he was not an originator of a great amount of successful legislation. He promoted legislation as a member of the "team." He was a man without personal economic pressures, and he was able to spend the necessary time. Though his was not a career centered in the limelight, it is this type of individual who helps to provide continuity and stability in the state government. It may be said that Bryan's political career; though not outstanding, was a worthy contribution to his state.

The year, 1914, brought for W. J. Bryan a new life style that continued until his death in 1948. He continued his business activity and developed a more extensive correspondence with old friends of school days that continued until the death of the writer, and it was fairly typical of the correspondence between friends who have grown old in years as well as in acquaintances.

Bryan was fortunate in the choice of personnel to run the day to day operation of the T-Bar Diamond Ranch. It gave him the opportunity to age gracefully without money concerns. He frequently went to the ranch, but he did not actively administer it. His son, Bernard, and a ranch foreman looked after it. Bryan maintained an office where he looked after his investments and other affairs in addition to leisurely and haphazardly practicing law. He continued to read, and over the years he became a repository of regional folklore and history. Unfortunately he did not



again the feeling of their graduation review. They were joined by their old servant, "old Negro Charles." The old servant had fallen on hard times, but he insisted on serving the former Aggies as he had done those many years before. The former cadets were saddened by his plight, and they took up a collection for some new clothes and to meet other pressing needs. Within a few years "old Negro Charles" died, still treasuring the memory of his former "boys" who had come back to see him. Former Cadet M. Black said that the old servant had "gone where all the good darkies go."<sup>22</sup> This enthusiasm and interest in Texas A. & M. continued until the very end of Bryan's life.

The former Legislator continued to exert considerable political influence. During August, 1919, he received a letter from Congressman Claude B. Hudspeth of the Sixteenth Texas Congressional District who wanted to know Bryan's opinion about the regulation of the packing industry.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately Bryan's reply to this letter and to hundreds of others that he received during these years is not extant. No doubt the veteran cattleman favored the regulation of the meat packers and opposed anything that would hurt the cattle industry.

Later in 1919, Bryan received a letter from the Director General of the United States Good Roads Association. He had been nominated for a life membership in the association by Senator Morris Sheppard.<sup>24</sup> This

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Letter from Congressman C. B. Hudspeth, 16th District, August 14, 1919.

<sup>24</sup> Letter from J. A. Rountree, Director-General of the Good Roads Association, Alabama, December 19, 1919.

organization was created to provide lobbying support for the development of a network of major national highways. It was made up of influential supporters of road development from throughout the country.

Bryan received a letter from Deputy Sheriff Mosher of Yucca, Arizona on November 14, 1920. In the letter, Mosher referred to good hunting and remembered the time when he was a young man in the Abilene country when Bryan had offered to pay young Mosher's college expenses. Mosher indicated that he later regretted his rejection of Bryan's offer. The offer was exceptional; W. J. Bryan was not renowned for his generosity.

One of the ways that money is accumulated is to have access to opportunities for making money. Bryan was able to remain "well to do" throughout his life because he was astute enough to gain and take advantage of his opportunities. An A. & M. schoolmate wrote in October, 1921, stating that he was the receiver for the Ranger First National Bank. The bank held chattel mortgages on several lots of cattle in Shackelford and Stephen's Counties, and he asked Bryan's opinion on the plans for liquidation.<sup>25</sup> The letter contains an implied offer to sell to Bryan. Apparently no transaction resulted, but the letter illustrated the prestige of Bryan in matters relating and pertaining to cattle.

Some of the business activities that Bryan engaged in in town included real estate and investments. He owned his brick home at 1740 North First Street and the wooden home that he had built for his bride after their marriage. He owned the Bryan Building on Pine Street, an office

---

<sup>25</sup>Letter from E. B. Cushing, Ranger, October 14, 1921.

building in Hobbs, New Mexico, and numerous other pieces of property.<sup>26</sup> He maintained a relatively large inventory of rental property in and around Abilene. His ranching operations continued with more of an overview of the day to day management than during the years when he was a busy legislator. It was his practice to go to the ranch and oversee the work of his foreman, rather than to engage in the day to day management himself.

For several years Bryan was one of the mainstays of the Anson "The Cowboys Christmas Ball." This was a social event that first began back in the 1880's as a way of seeing friends and relieving the tedium of the long gray winters. It is best celebrated in the ballads by Walt Cousins and Larry Chittenden. The setting of Chittenden's poem was truly a land familiar to John Bryan:

Way out in Western Texas, where the Clear  
Forks waters flow,  
Where the cattle are "a-browzin" and the Spanish  
ponies grow. . .<sup>27</sup>

In "Changing Scenes" Walt Cousins tried to capture the times when the country was opened up by the ranching families including the Bryans. When the pioneers had come together at the early Cowboys Christmas Balls, it had been a festive occasion that reminded one and all that they were facing the same dangers and problems, and that they shared a common identity and heritage.

---

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Dr. Rupert N. Richardson, July, 1971.

<sup>27</sup> Lawrence W. Chittenden, "The Cowboys Christmas Ball," Ranch Verses, 1893, p. 12.

Bryan's host of friends were widely distributed and he received letters on a broad range of subjects. For instance in 1931, he received a letter from a George S. Berry with information on the derivation of Abilene's name. Berry claimed that the name was not borrowed from the Kansas cattle center, but that the town had been named by Col. J. Stoddard Johnston of Kentucky. Colonel Johnston was a guest at the Berry home in Belle Plaine, and Berry was told that he had found the name in the Bible. Berry cited Luke III, passage 3, "Lysanias the Tetraich of Abilene." Berry said that Abilene, in this selection meant, "a grassy place."<sup>28</sup> It may be added in passing that Berry's letter did not affect the Merchant claim to naming Abilene. It was named after Abilene, Kansas, and Abilene, Kansas was a biblical name as Johnston indicated.

During the 1930's, Bryan was accidentally hit by a boy who was driving a car. Bryan refused to press charges against the boy, because it had been an accident.<sup>29</sup> It would have been ironic if he had chosen to press charges because of his own disregard for all traffic laws. One day he was driving through downtown, and he failed to stop when the light turned red. A young officer turned to his partner ready to arrest Bryan. The older officer said that it was Senator Bryan, and that he just drove that way. He further stated that Bryan had a tendency to disregard any traffic law with which he disagreed.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Letter from George S. Berry, Tulsa, May 29, 1931.

<sup>29</sup> Dallas Morning News, "Being Hit by Car Doesn't Ruffle Texan" (date and page unknown).

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Dr. Rupert N. Richardson, July, 1971.

One day during this period, Bryan was traveling with friends north of Abilene when he was involved in an accident. He somehow managed to sideswipe the right side of an approaching car. Fortunately no one in the Bryan party was injured, but he did insist that the individuals in the other car come into Abilene and go into the hospital for an examination at his expense.<sup>31</sup> This is not only the action of a humane man, but it is a wise business and legal-minded man. Within days of the accident, Bryan made this clear in a letter which in written form limited his legal and financial liability.<sup>32</sup> The cavalier disregard for traffic laws was legend, and they continued until a short time before his death. His family and friends agree that his careless driving was not the result of indifference to human welfare and the rights of others but the inability of a man who had reached maturity in another era to conform to the minute rules of the automobile age.

In November, 1942, the Senator received a letter from Colonel Homer Garrison, head of the Texas Department of Public Safety, requesting that he consent to take a test for the renewal of his driver's license.<sup>33</sup> This request was made because of his age, eighty-three years. One might question whether the Senator's driving reputation had spread to Austin. He evidently did pass this new examination because he continued to go to

---

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Carol Bryan Izard, August, 1972.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Letter from J. B. Draper, Austin, November 23, 1942.

the ranch in his car, particularly when accompanied by his granddaughter, Carol Bryan (Izard), the daughter of Dr. W. J. Bryan Jr. of Oklahoma.<sup>34</sup>

He had certain ideas that were the outgrowths of the social Darwinism of his younger days. He believed that people who were benefitted by economic good fortune were benefitted because of their innate qualities. This attitude is dedicated in his statement, "people often profit by drought just as poverty helps them."<sup>35</sup> The statement is from a man who never knew personal poverty, but it does provide justification for his good fortune in life.

In the late 1930's Bryan let several friends and associates know that he was considering an autobiography interwoven with the history of Abilene. Once the word got out, several writers and publishers approached him in the hope of being associated with the project.<sup>36</sup> It is easy to understand their interest. Bryan had been a living part of the development of Abilene. During the years, John Lomax, Frank Dobie, and other writers had come to see him for first hand stories on the development of the state. His stature as a West Texan is forcefully stated by Senator Tom Connally in a letter dated 1945: "you, more than any other

---

<sup>34</sup>Interview with Carol Bryan Izard, August, 1972.

<sup>35</sup>Dallas Morning News, "Being Hit by a Car Doesn't Ruffle Texan" (date and page unknown).

<sup>36</sup>Interview with Dr. Rupert N. Richardson, July, 1971.

man I could name, have known and observed the development of West Texas, to which you have contributed so richly through the years."<sup>37</sup>

In the many letters that nostalgically remind Bryan and his friends of their younger days, a reference to "Old Crow" appears near the end. "Old Crow" was bourbon. Probably they talked about it more than they drank it. It is worth repeating that throughout his life, he was abstemious.

During the period shortly before the outbreak of World War II, at the later stages of the depression, many men were examining themselves and their beliefs.<sup>38</sup> One of the Senator's friends, Wash Hardy a Shreveport attorney, put his thoughts into a pamphlet. This pamphlet was entitled "Peace on Earth."<sup>39</sup> The pamphlet went to some of Bryan's friends also and some responded to it.

Judge W. M. Sleeper of Waco assumed the role of the devil's advocate. He chose to examine the pamphlet critically and to question the thesis. He attacked it as being a naive attempt to combine one worldism with some type of Christian mysticism. Sleeper stated that the aim and purpose of the pamphlet was laudable, but that it was "other worldly."<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Letter from Senator Tom Connally, Washington, March 17, 1945.

<sup>38</sup> Letter from G. W. Hardy (Shreveport) to Judge Will Sleeper (Waco), May 25, 1943.

<sup>39</sup> Hardy, G. W., "Peace on Earth."

<sup>40</sup> Letter from Sleeper to Hardy, March 18, 1940, letter from Hardy to Sleeper, March 21, 1940.

Sleeper dismissed the pamphlet, but he did not do so in contempt. His actions are clearly out of what he considered to be loving friendship.

Hardy wrote a series of letters to Bryan attempting to gain his support for "Peace on Earth," but the Senator did not respond in a candid manner. He did, however, write to Judge Sleeper indicating his skepticism of such a position as indicated in the pamphlet. This avoidance of a confrontation is logically an outgrowth of the earlier disposition of the West Texan to avoid issues. In this case his evasion was warranted because his friend was making a fetish of his idea. Still it must be said that one repeatedly finds implied and overt speculation on such matters by the Senator, particularly after the time of the Senator's almost fatal injury in 1912.



## CHAPTER V

### Last Years: Family and Friends

The life of W. J. Bryan during the decade preceding his death in 1948 was linked mainly with family and friends. He was no longer active in politics. He continued to visit his ranch from time to time, but he spent little time there and placed in his son, Bernard, the responsibility of its management. Likewise, he gave little time to his other properties in Abilene and elsewhere; truly he gave himself to loved ones about him and to friends of other years. Even though the Grim Reaper was taking its toll of them, he managed to keep in touch with a large acquaintanceship, many of them stemming from years near the turn of the century.

Members of the elder statesman's family were dear to him. His two sons, Bernard and W. J. Jr., had their own lives and families and followed their careers with keen interest. Bernard, a bachelor for many years, married Mrs. Julia Cooper of Abilene. They did not have any children of their own, but Mrs. Cooper had two sons by her previous marriage. Dr. W. J. Bryan Jr. married and two children were born to the marriage.<sup>1</sup> Carol Bryan Izard, daughter of W. J. Bryan Jr., would come to Abilene for visits and the Tall Texan would share his knowledge and experiences with his granddaughter. He would come to her door shortly before daybreak and ask her if she were awake. She would always respond that

---

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Carol Bryan Izard, August, 1972.

she was, even though she may have been just awakened from sound sleep. She would dress quickly, and they would go in the Senator's old car. He would drive in one direction or another, telling her of the land, the people, and their experiences.<sup>2</sup> Miss Bryan was given an opportunity, that of hearing pioneering stories from a participant, which would cause her to be sought after by many writers and other interested persons. These excursions frequently frightened the girl's mother Mrs. W. J. Bryan Jr. because of the Senator's eccentric driving habits. Still through these rides and the stories linked with them, she shared generously in the history of this section.

Two of Senator Bryan's sisters, Mrs. K. K. Legett and Mrs. Will Young, resided in Abilene. K. K. Legett was an outstanding lawyer, one of the founders of Simmons College, and for many years a regent of A. & M. College. Will Young was a widely known rancher and business man.<sup>3</sup>

Bryan was fond of his relatives and liked to chat with them. One practice that he had, shows how for all his kindness and geniality, egocentricity would come out occasionally. He would drive his car to the front of the house, sound his horn, and expect one or more of the family he was visiting to come out and have a talk at his car. One kinswoman became so vexed at the practice that she told him either to come to the door, ring the bell, and come in, or drive on by. Otherwise, he would

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

have to honk until he would surely run his battery down.<sup>4</sup> He did not do any more honking, and his visits were less frequent.

W. J. Bryan's friends represented a wide range of business and professional interests, but their letters during his last years are largely personal and pertain to rich experiences of the past. He was always interested and evidently often was moved by letters from friends of his college days.

The men of Texas A. & M. were always dear to him, and he cherished and kept their letters. William Malone, the well-known Houston banker, wrote him occasionally, never leaving out references to the boys of 1876, 1877, and 1878.<sup>5</sup> Bryan wrote Judge W. M. Sleeper in 1940 inviting him to join with a score of other old A. & M. cronies in a picnic at the Bryan ranch. "The old crowd" was a term that he used often. There are letters from Malcolm Black, an old A. & M. schoolmate, through 1944. On one occasion Black urged a reunion. He said that only fifty of the 387 cadets and schoolmates remained alive. Apparently this reunion was never held.<sup>6</sup>

Bryan did not forget his friends made at Cumberland Law School in Tennessee. One N. G. Robertson of Sarasota, Florida replied warmly to a letter and clipping that had been sent by Bryan.<sup>7</sup> The old ranchman also continued his correspondence with his fellow cattlemen.

---

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Rupert N. Richardson, July, 1971.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from William Malone, Houston, January 2, 1945.

<sup>6</sup> Letter from M. Black, Sterling City, October 1, 1943.

<sup>7</sup> Letter from N. G. Robertson, Sarasota, Florida, February 16, 1938.

The largest group and the most enthusiastic of Bryan's compatriots of other years was made up of politicians. Apparently they never neglected him, and they were most generous in their words of appreciation. J. T. Canales, a Mexican-American lawyer and former legislator of Brownsville, wrote of their days in the legislature, "You and I were always together like Mutt and Jeff."<sup>8</sup> Canales' comments on Bryan's career are revealing. Canales and Bryan were pro-Bailey during the period from 1901 to 1912. During this period the Bailey question was often paramount in Texas politics. It will be recalled that United States Senator Bailey was condemned by many of his contemporaries as being subservient to the Waters-Pearce Oil Company, a subsidiary of Standard Oil, while other public men of that day contended that Bailey had done nothing wrong. Canales reminded Bryan that although he and Bryan were Bailey men they worked harmoniously with the anti-Bailey men. Under almost any conditions imaginable, W. J. Bryan would be working in the interest of harmony.

John Hornsby, the Austin Lawyer, whom Bryan had known well during his days as a lawmaker wrote from time to time expressing appreciation of clippings that Bryan had sent him.<sup>9</sup> The clippings were generally about Bryan.

Some of Bryan's political friends attained renown. He knew how to measure men, and he cultivated men of prominence. In 1943, Sam Rayburn, then Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, wrote

---

<sup>8</sup> Letter from J. T. Canales, Brownsville, March 15, 1941, and letter of August 8, 1942.

<sup>9</sup> Letter from John Hornsby, Austin, February 25, 1945.

Bryan a congratulatory letter about a picture and write-up of Bryan that had been published.<sup>10</sup> They had served together in Austin.

Earle B. Mayfield, former United States Senator, then a lawyer in Tyler, wrote Bryan from time to time reminding him of their association in the Austin years.<sup>11</sup> In 1941 he suggested to Bryan that he ought to give a picnic for the men of the Thirtieth and Thirty-first legislatures. Upon occasion Mayfield would even grow eloquent:

Dear John--an ornate even eloquent commentary of the times is the finer things of life are born in the crucible of suffering. . . among those who suffered or endured hardships to promote a better life for everybody were pioneers, such as Bryan.<sup>12</sup>

Mention has been made already of the interest that professional writers took in Bryan, cultivated Bryan and sought to exploit his pioneer experience through their writings. Their efforts met with only a modicum of success. J. Frank Dobie, probably the best known Texas writer of the 1940's, visited Bryan at times, but he apparently got nothing more than a few good stories.<sup>13</sup> John A. Lomax urged Bryan to write a book on "some horses I have known," citing J. Frank Dobie's book on horses.<sup>14</sup> Bryan's reply to Lomax's letter is not extant, but obviously Bryan was not interested. Lomax did succeed in getting interviews from Bryan which appeared in Southwest Review entitled, "A Stop-over in Abilene," published

---

<sup>10</sup> Letter from Sam Rayburn, Washington, January 18, 1943.

<sup>11</sup> Letter from Earle B. Mayfield, Tyler, March 17, 1941, and December 7, 1942.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., December 21, 1943.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Dr. Rupert N. Richardson, July, 1971

<sup>14</sup> Letter from John Lomax, Dallas, June 12, 1940.

in July, 1940. This article dealt with Bryan's entire career, with particular attention to his ranching experiences.

From time to time Mr. Bryan gathered material pertaining to the history of the Abilene country and different friends urged him to write a book weaving into the story of the region his own biography. He would never express more than a mild interest in such a project. Rupert N. Richardson, editor of the Year Book of the West Texas Historical Association sought repeatedly to persuade him to submit to an interview from which his short biography might have been written and published in the Year Book, but Bryan never did get around to it.<sup>15</sup> His reply to the suggestions would likely be an anecdote or reference to the fact that other writers had expressed interest in the same thing, and that he was giving thought to it. He never refused, nor did he ever assent; and the years and decades passed with nothing more than a few stories, generally humorous ones.

An examination of Senator Bryan's papers and conversations with those who knew him reveals some explanation for his unwillingness to attempt an autobiographical work of consequence. He remembered episodes, events in his own experience and in public affairs. He did not organize his thinking about the past. Also, whether he wrote (very few of his letters are extant) or talked, he would dwell on things that he wanted to remember, other matters were ignored and soon forgotten.<sup>16</sup> He loved publicity and the approval of friends and the public, as reams of newspaper

---

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

clippings about him reveal; and he bought extra copies of newspapers and sent the clippings to his friends.

In reply to John Lomax's suggestion that he write a book on horses, he might have answered truly that he was not then and never had been especially interested in horses. Certainly he liked to ride a good horse. He took care of his horses as most good ranchmen do, and there is no doubt that he had some affection for them. However, his interest was primarily in people. He kept in touch with his ranch and loved it, but it never was his major interest. He was influential in the legislature, and he made a commendable record. Yet it can be said that he was not interested in legislating. He had to work at it, but always his heart was with his constituents and fellow legislators not with the bills and resolutions with which he had to deal.<sup>17</sup> In fact, W. J. Bryan knew his limitations better than those who approached him to write an autobiography or other book. He never granted his own assent to undertake it.

Another example of this aspect of Bryan's personality is found in a letter from E. M. Overshiner to John Lomax.<sup>18</sup> Bryan had given a Lomax book to Overshiner for comments. Since Lomax had previously asked Bryan for comments, one must assume that this is another example of Bryan's desire to avoid a confrontation. Overshiner used this opportunity to make comments on Bryan to Lomax and Bryan received a copy. Overshiner said that Bryan was a companionable man who had sufficient property to free him from the necessity of making a living. Overshiner saw in this

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Letter from E. M. Overshiner to John Lomax, October 7, 1940.

freedom for the leisure class an opportunity to devote themselves to entertainment and philosophical matters. He stated that the Senator enjoyed associations and making quaint observations on life and people. He further stated that Bryan had once urged Will Rogers to run for Vice President. Rogers glanced up after Bryan assured him that he would handle the details, and said, "Well, you know you got a good deal of humor about you," and then he went on typing. Overshiner summed Bryan up by saying that the Senator refused to be led, and that he would avoid direct answers.<sup>19</sup>

Another old friend's remembrance of the Senator dealt with one of Bryan's favorite stories during the early 1940's about with Coyotes. He said they had a novel way of killing chickens. The coyotes would run around and around the roost until the frightened chickens became so dizzy that they would fall to the ground in front of the coyotes.<sup>20</sup> Much of the former legislator's life was centered in anecdotes and remembrances.

During the early days of World War II, there were scrap drives. In answer to an appeal, Bryan agreed to donate his old Dodge for the "cause." Because of the car's age and the Senator's prominence, the story was covered in the Abilene Reporter, 1942.<sup>21</sup> John Lomax wrote requesting to use the story in his forthcoming The Adventures of a Ballad Hunter.

During World War II, the Hollywood Film industry began to make a number of movies that dealt with American military heritage. One of these

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Letter from J. T. Canales, Brownsville, August, 1942.

<sup>21</sup> Letter from John A. Lomax, October 9, 1942.



films was set at Texas A. & M., and it was entitled We've Never Been Licked. This Walter Wanger picture starred Richard Quinne, Anne Gwynne, Noah Beery Jr., Edgar Barrier, Bob Mitchum, and Bill Stern.<sup>22</sup> This was a young cast, and it consisted of actors who were at the beginning of their careers. Bryan happened to be at College Station during the filming. As the oldest A. & M. graduate present, he received much notice from the college, film people, and the newspapers.<sup>23</sup> One picture was taken of him with a number of beautiful young girls, and it was widely published. Many of his friends wrote teasing and slightly envious letters. The experience was one of the public high-water marks of his last decade.

The Senator continued to watch his money, but he did know when to spend it. Once when visiting the John Hornsby of Austin, he gave a silver dollar to their baby, and he laughed when the baby squeezed the dollar.<sup>24</sup>

Old friend Wash Hardy wrote Judge Will Sleeper in May, 1943, giving his impressions of Bryan. He believed that Bryan was a "great old sport," and that he is a "semi-Will Rogers." Hardy stated that Bryan is as "rough as the western wilds and as tender as a hot house daisy."<sup>25</sup> This description is an expression of the gender of the rustic American.

Shortly before Christmas, 1943, Bryan wrote a legislator, Bryan Bradberry, stating that he regretted his own inability to participate in

---

<sup>22</sup> We've Never Been Licked, Universal Pictures, 1945.

<sup>23</sup> Abilene Reporter-News, "Aggie of '79 Finding Hollywood Girls on Campus, Remembers less fully. . . , January 21, 1945, p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> Letter from John Hornsby, December 10, 1942.

<sup>25</sup> Letter from Hardy to Sleeper (copy), May 25, 1943.

the war effort and that he could not visit Austin. He stated that he had just had a heart x-ray, and that he was awaiting the results.<sup>26</sup> This is a warm letter addressed to a local attorney who was considered to be more progressive than the usual representatives of the Abilene country. Bryan closes the letter by stating that Bradberry was part of a new day, and that he was closer to "the perfect bottle of Old Crow" (referring to a closer approximation of an ideal and its realization).

In early 1944, Judge W. M. Sleeper died. The circle of Bryan's contemporaries was narrowing with increased speed. The absence of these vital and intelligent companions of the past left him alone. His health was becoming increasingly fragile. The letters received during these twilight years were full of unspoken and spoken regrets at the passing of time and their lives. Even with these melancholy events and observations, Bryan and his friends retained an interest in the world about them, and they often commented on the changing values. The Reverend Black wrote of the Homer Rainey problems at the University of Texas.<sup>27</sup> Homer Rainey had been dismissed from the presidency of the University, and there had been an outcry from the students and the public that eventually led Rainey into an unsuccessful gubernatorial campaign. Black's interest came from the period when he had ministered to the Rainey family.

Bryan and his wife began to decline in health, but he remained semi-active until six months before his death. Through the years Mrs. Bryan had been his companion and counselor with a devotion to him and had

---

<sup>26</sup>Letter from Bryan to Bryan Bradberry, Austin, December 21, 1943.

<sup>27</sup>Letter from Malcolm Black, Sterling City, December 21, 1944.

exercised an immeasurable influence over him. A daughter of the renowned Methodist preacher B. D. Dashiels brought up in Brenham, Texas, she had brought to their home a degree of beauty and refinement that was very much in evidence. As the two of them began to fail in health, Mr. Bryan became greatly disturbed lest death might claim him first at the time when she needed him the most. "I must stay around a while longer," he said to family and friends, "I must not die and leave her in that condition." She died on August 10, 1948 preceding him in death by sixteen days.<sup>28</sup> They had lived together in a close, mutually beneficial relationship, and with her death Bryan was left alone. It was as if only one of a pair of bookends remained, and it no longer filled its function. It was one of the ironies of Bryan's life that he died intestate, as did his father, Colonel Washington C. Bryan, and his son Bernard (Tex) Bryan some twenty-two years later in 1971.<sup>29</sup> This is most unusual in a family of means, and it explains the division of the original T-Bar Diamond Ranch in 1905.

W. J. Bryan's personality was complex. He could be both progressive and conservative when measured by the standard of his day. If we may accept at face value his letter to Bryan Brandberry, written late in life, he grew more progressive with the years. He was egotistical to a degree that became offensive at times, and yet, he could be genial and kindly. He won and retained the friendship of a large number of men of influence and renown, evidence that he was not of diminutive stature.

---

<sup>28</sup> Abilene Reporter-News, August 11, 1948.

<sup>29</sup> County Clerk's Office, Taylor County, 1905, 1948, 1960.

He often left the impression that he was well informed on certain subjects, but reluctant to speak out, that he was concealing something. Beyond a doubt he sometimes failed to express himself fully because of his disinclination to clash with others, but he also used such an attitude to conceal his lack of information.

Senator Bryan lived a long time, and to some degree, the last twenty years appear to be anticlimatic. Because of his participation in the development of the region, his contribution to its history and folklore was of value. He left a worthy record of public accomplishments and his private life was wholesome. He earned a place in the roll of worthy Texas pioneers.

# THE COWBOYS' CHRISTMAS BALL ~ ANSON ~ 1935.

## THE COWBOYS CHRISTMAS BALL ~ Larry Chittenden ~

In Western Texas, where the Clear Fork's waters flow,  
The cattle are a-browzin' an' the Spanish ponies grow;  
The Northerners come a-whistlin' from beyond the Neutral Strip;  
The Airio dogs are sneezin', as if they had "The Grip";  
The gayotes come a-howlin' 'round the ranches after dark,  
The singing birds are singin' to the lovely "medder lark";  
The 'possum and the badger, and the rattlesnakes abound,  
The monstrous stars are winkin' o'er a wilderness profound;  
The tawny prairies melt into airy streams,  
The noble Mountains slumber, in heavenly kinds of dreams;  
The antelope is grazin' and the lonely plovers call —  
That I attended "The Cowboys' Christmas Ball."

Anson City, old Jones' county seat,  
The raise Polled Angus cattle, and waving whiskered wheat;  
The air is soft and "bummy", and dry an' full of health,  
The prairie 'er explodin' with agricultural wealth;  
The print the Texas Eastern, that Rec McCann supplies,  
The and varms and stories, uv the most amazin' size;  
The Smith "pulls the badger," on knowin' tenderfeet,  
The boy's triumphant and mighty hard to beat;  
The that good old hunter, John Milsap from Lamar,  
The to be the Sheriff back East, in Paris, Sah."  
The I say, at Anson, with the lively "Widder Wall,"  
The to that reception, "The Cowboys' Christmas Ball."

The left the ranches and came to town in piles;  
The "kinder scatterin'," had gathered in for miles.  
The place was crowded, as I remember well,  
The for the occasion, at "The Morning Star Hotel."  
The a fiddle an' a lively tambourine,  
The come imported "by the stage from Abilene."  
The topped out gorgeous — with mistletoe and shawls,  
The flickered frescoes around the airy walls.  
The folks "looked lovely — the boys looked kinder treed,  
The leader commenced yellin': "Whoa! fellers, let's stampede."  
The started aighn' an' a-wailin' through the hall,  
The introduction to "The Cowboys' Christmas Ball."

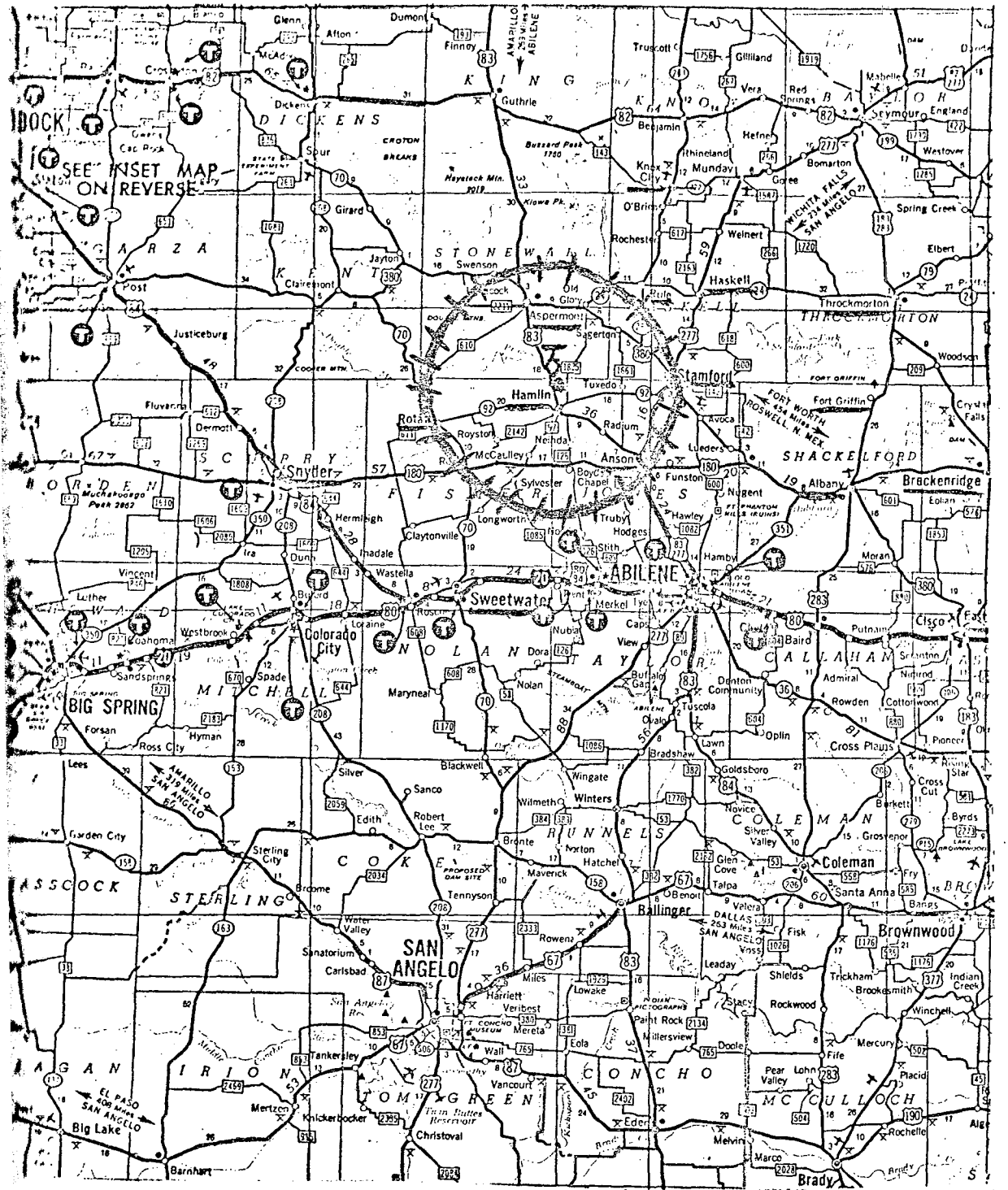
The leader was a feller that came from Swenson's Ranch,  
They called him "Windy Billy" from "Little Deadman's Bra"  
His rig was "kinder keerless," big spurs and high heeled b  
He had the reputation that comes when "fellers shoots,"  
His voice was like a bugle upon the mountain's height;  
His foot were animated an' A MIGHTY MOVIN' SIGHT,  
When he commenced to holler, "Neow fellers, stake yer pen  
"Look horns ter all them heifers, an' rusado 'em live men.  
"Saloot yer lovely critter; neow swing an' let 'em go,  
"Climb the grape vine 'round 'em — all hands do-es-do!  
"You Mavericks, fine the round-up — jest skip her waterfal  
Huh! hit was gettin' happy, "The Cowboys' Christmas Ball!"

The boys were tolerable skittish, the ladies powerful neat,  
The old bass viol's music JUST GOT THERE WITH BOTH FEET!  
That wailin' frisky fiddle, I never shall forget;  
And Windy kept a-singin' — I think I hear him yet —  
"O X'es, chase your squirrels, an' cut 'em to one side,  
"Spur Treadwell to the center, with Cross P. Charley's bric  
"Doo Hollis down the middle, an' twine the ladies chain,  
"Varn Andrews pon the fillies in big "Diamond's train."  
"All pull yer freight together, neow swallow fork an' cham  
"Big Boston lead the trail herd, through little Pitchfork's  
"Purr 'round yer gentle pussies, neow rope 'em! Balance al  
Huh! hit was gettin' active — "The Cowboys' Christmas Ball"

The dust ris fast an' furious, we all just galloped 'round,  
'Till the scenery got so giddy, that Z'Bar Dick was downed.  
We buckled on our partners, an' tole 'em to hold on,  
Then chook our hoofs like lightning, until the early dawn.  
Don't tell me 'bout cotillions, or Germans. No stree!  
That whirl at Anson City just takes the cake with me.  
I'm sick of lacy smufflin's, of them I've had my fill,  
Give me a frontier break-down, backed up by Windy Bill.  
McAllister ain't nohar when Windy leads the show,  
I've seen 'em both in harness, and so I orter know —  
Oh, Bill, I shan't forget ye, and I'll oft times recall,  
That lively gited sworray — "The Cowboys' Christmas Ball."

ANSON CITY





Colonel Washington C. Bryan's T-Diamond Ranch in the 1880's.  
 The T-Diamond Ranch owned by W. J. Bryan consists of  
 a segment of 7,500 Acres near the center and to the  
 North and East of the original T-Diamond (including  
 the old ranch headquarters) establishment.

(Map shows ranch in relation to modern towns and communities.)

# Abilene the Central City

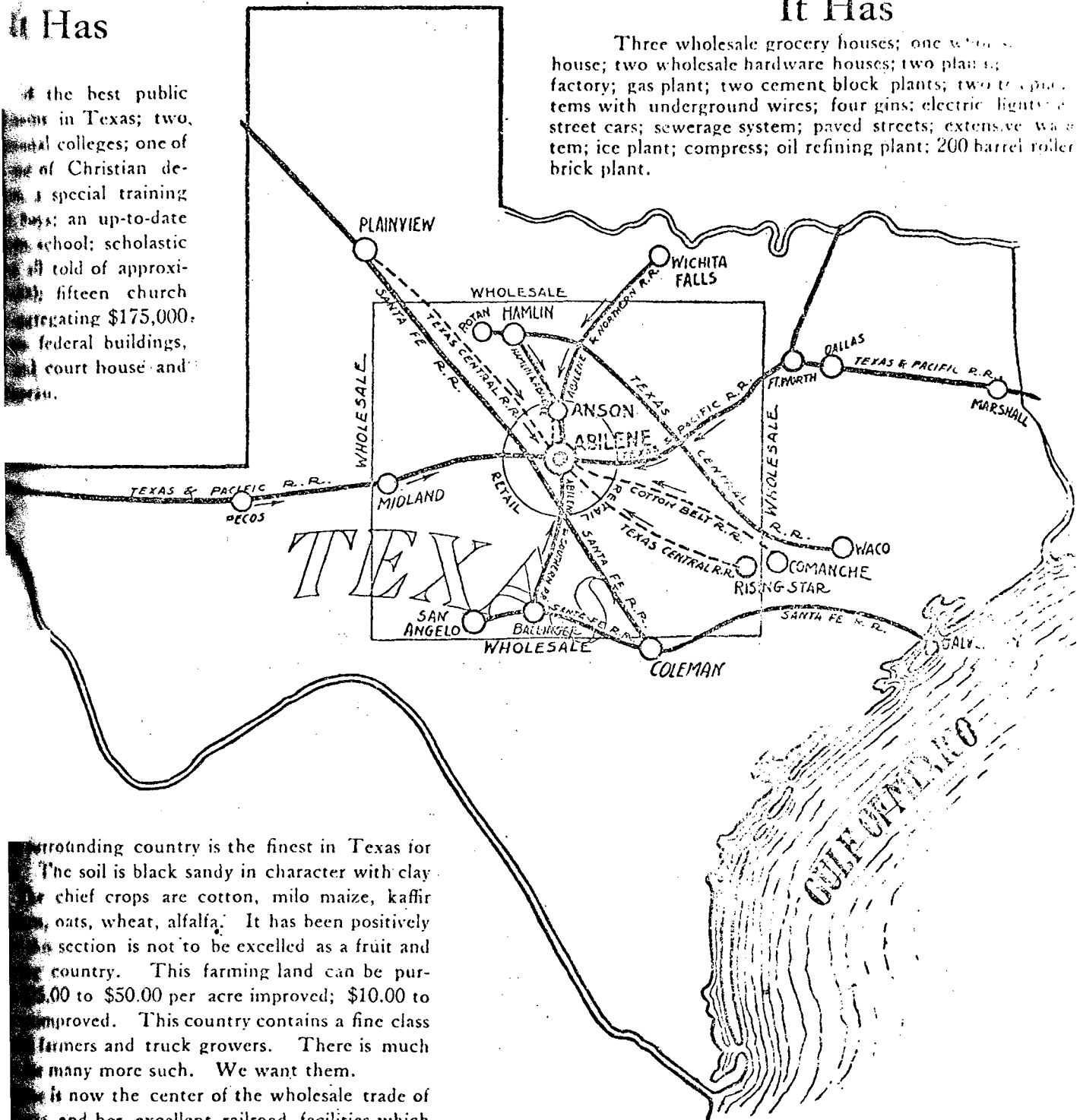
OF

It Has

the best public schools in Texas; two, normal colleges; one of the best of Christian development; a special training school; an up-to-date school; scholastic record told of approximately fifteen church edifices aggregating \$175,000; federal buildings, a court house and many more.

It Has

Three wholesale grocery houses; one wholesale hardware house; two wholesale hardware houses; two planing mills; a gas plant; two cement block plants; two telephone systems with underground wires; four gins; electric light and street cars; sewerage system; paved streets; extensive water works; ice plant; compress; oil refining plant; 200 barrel roller brick plant.



The surrounding country is the finest in Texas for farming. The soil is black sandy in character with clay. The chief crops are cotton, milo maize, kaffir corn, oats, wheat, alfalfa. It has been positively determined that this section is not to be excelled as a fruit and vegetable country. This farming land can be purchased for \$10.00 to \$50.00 per acre improved; \$10.00 to \$20.00 per acre unimproved. This country contains a fine class of farmers and truck growers. There is much more of this kind of land. We want them.

Abilene is now the center of the wholesale trade of Texas and her excellent railroad facilities which will be added in the near future make her future as a great city assured.

The opportunity for safe investment is here. Write for more information.

## Abilene 25,000 Club, Abilene, Texas

B. E. LOONEY, Secretary



HEADQUARTERS OF  
DEMOCRATIC ROUGH RIDERS  
OF WEST TEXAS.

TEAM BREEDS OF PRESIDENT  
D. SPURLOCK, 1ST VICE-PRES.  
CHAS. S. BASS, 2ND VICE-PRES.  
B. E. OLIVER, SECRETARY.  
J. M. CUNNINGHAM, TREASURER.

UBIENE, TEXAS, November 12, 1898.

Col. Theodore Roosevelt,

Governor Elect of New York.

Dear Sir:--

The Democratic Rough Riders of Taylor County, Texas, through their president and secretary hereby extend to you their congratulations on your recent victory in the election in your state.

"Democratic Rough Riders" is the name adopted by an organization of young men in this county, now numbering about three hundred. The organization was perfected last summer when news of the deeds of the "Rough Riders" was on every lip. Politically we have been opposed to the populists, who have heretofore been very strong in this part of the country. This fall we elected our entire county ticket for the first time in four years and rounded out good majorities for the state ticket. The conservatives and republicans have been very friendly to us, and we have been universally commended for the honorable methods by which we conducted the campaign.

Although we belong to a party politically opposed to the one to which you owe allegiance, yet throughout the excitement of our campaign and the exultations of victory we have never lost interest in your contest; for it was through you that the name "Rough Riders" became a catch word for all parties, and a synonym for all that is high and honorable and courageous. Throughout the course of the Rough Riders are the admiration of the civilized

HEADQUARTERS  
DEMOCRATIC ROUGH RIDERS  
OF WEST TEXAS.

D. SPURLOCK, 1ST VICE-PRES.  
CHAS. S. BASS, 2ND VICE-PRES.  
B. E. OLIVER, SECRETARY.  
J. M. CUNNINGHAM, TREASURER.

ABILENE, TEXAS, \_\_\_\_\_

world, the best part of our history and will stir the blood of  
young Americans ~~and~~<sup>of</sup> generations to come as they do of the present.  
In hours of the nation's peril may there always be Roosevelts and  
"Rough Riders."

For coupling the name of "Rough Riders" with that of Demo-  
cracy, we have no apologies to offer. You came to Texas to organ-  
ize your regiment, and many a brave Texas democrat followed you  
up San Juan hill or died on the field of ~~war~~ *carnage*.

Now that you are the governor of the greatest state in the  
Union in number of inhabitants and commercial importance, may  
your wisdom and judgment in governing equal your courage on the  
field of battle, and may the Empire State point to the rule  
of the "Rough Rider" governor as the best in her history. This  
is the wish that comes from a distant part of the country, from  
those who, though they might oppose you politically, are never-  
theless admiring friends.

We enclose herewith one of the badges adopted by the Demo-  
cratic Rough Riders during the campaign. We understand that it  
differs materially from that worn by your followers in the xxxxxx  
campaign in your state, but do not know in that particular except  
in party name.

Yours very truly,

Bruce E. Oliver  
Secretary.

*J. A. Black*  
President D. R. R.

HEADQUARTERS OF  
DEMOCRATIC ROUGH RIDERS  
OF WEST TEXAS.

D. SPURLOCK, 1ST VICE-PRES.  
CHAS. S. BASS, 2ND VICE-PRES.  
B. E. OLIVER, SECRETARY.  
J. M. GUNNINGHAM, TREASURER.

New York  
OBILENE, TEXAS, Dec 2nd 1898

My Dear Sir:-

I thank you very much  
in my regiment. I think I had  
good many more democrats  
and Republicans, for it was  
recruited mostly in the South-  
west, where, of course, the  
democrats were in the ma-  
jority; but it was my par-  
ticular pride that I never  
considered anything except  
whether a man was a good  
soldier - he might be from  
the East or West, from the  
North or South, a Democrat  
or Republican, Catholic or  
Protestant, he he was a good

ABILENE, TEXAS.

When I was for him, if  
it was not, I was against  
him, and that was all  
there was about it.

Faithfully yours,

Theodore Roosevelt

Mrs. J. A. Bledsoe

Abilene, Texas.

July 6, 1923.

Mr. W. J. Bryan,  
Abilene,  
Texas.

Dear Bryan:

I would ask you to come out and see me, but the state of your health might make it inconvenient. Sincerely, I am looking for a mob to do me up at any time. I rather think it will come week after next. I cheerfully confess my unpopularity with the KKK's.

Some of the KKK's are gentlemen, with a wrong conception of Southern courage. Most southerners and all brave men hate to fight behind a mask. I know that is not 100% American. Some of the KKK's are fine business men, who profit by the frenzy of the hour. Others are mere camp-followers, but all together they constitute a force in this country that controls.

No one knows it better than I. I could not join them if I would and I would not if I could. Just now they have been aroused to new ire by the fact that I am trying to save some clients already convicted and others not yet arrested. The Court is not a KKK, but some of his closest friends and relatives are - they have all the officers and all the jurors, grand and petit, of this term of court.

Last January two parties - "Red" Orr and Luther Wise under my advice pleaded guilty to burning a bridge. At that time there was in Harrison hundreds of heavily armed men some what peeved. They made about 800 Union men and numerous sympathizers move in a hurry - they hung the only good man in the crowd and beat up numerous others. The miracle is that they did not do more.

I told my clients to look on the surging crowds and plead not guilty - they said they were not - and then be hung by a mob, or plead guilty, altho innocent, and go to the penitentiary for a long long time - the latter they did and received protection by being secretly taken away. Now, I am preparing, with other attorneys, a petition for a writ of habeas corpus before the Supreme Court.

It will, I presume, be filed today. Then I understand from some friends - those their graphic language - hell will break loose. My clients not being here and the lawyers being in other states I am the only witness object in sight - I have nobody except my wife and my stenographer - I am, as you may remember me too fat to run. Fortunately, I have a good rock in the cemetery pleasantly situated, so why should I worry?

I do not, and if you should see a notice in the paper that we have taken the long trail, no matter what life may be told, I want you to be in position to tell my friends who may also see the account that I have shown my friends how a brave man can die.

Practice has been unusually good of late, and this may account for some desire to be run away. I do not know and, frankly, I do not care. Life has always been reasonably easy with me and I have no reason to go to Abraham's in mind. I could have myself run away to go further for my clients, but would rather

Write me a long letter and tell me how you are getting on. You and I, now, are getting far down on the hill, and while you have always been rich and I am fortunate in getting richer, I am a firm believer in the man who said all men ought to die at 60.

Sincerely yours friend,

E. C. M.

# CUMBERLAND UNIVERSITY

FOUNDED 1842

TRADITIONAL SOUTHERN CULTURE

LEBANON, TENNESSEE

March 6, 1926.

Senator W. J. Bryan,  
Attorney at Law,  
Abilene, Texas.

Dear Senator Bryan:-

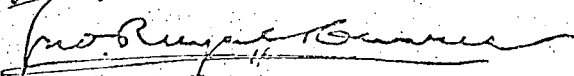
According to promise, I am sending you our law catalogue with the remarkable partial honor roll therein contained. The address of Shigehide Arakawa is Sapparo Hokkaido, Japan.

I cannot convey to you how grateful I am for your distinguished courtesies on my visit to Abilene. Tucker and I have had much to say about the unique way you have of putting things in your conversations, furnishing unusual enjoyment. A thing that struck us, too, was the evident great admiration your son had for you, and the light that your reminiscences gave him also. It is certainly a credit to a man when he can hold the high regard of those close to him in such a manner. Please express to Mrs. Bryan and your son again my most appreciative greetings.

Because of the trust your fellow-alumni repose in you in making you President - fully shared by ourselves - we are depending upon you to bring something to pass in assuring our safe continuance at this time. We have learned that our Texas brethren do things in a big fine way.

With great respect,

Sincerely yours,

  
John Royal Harris,  
P R E S I D E N T.

JRH/AC

SLEEPER, BOYNTON & KENDALL

ATTORNEYS AT LAW  
WACO, TEXAS.

MARCH 18, 1940.

Col. G. Wash Hardy,  
Shreveport, La.

Dear Wash:

I perused with particular pleasure your puissant production for perpetual peace as well as the accompanying commendatory and brilliant bulls of Baylor, Black and Bryan, my quantum military mess mates.

Your remarkable structure on paper of a world-wide State including a combination of all heterogeneous nations of our planet, was read with avidity and my thoughts elevated to a high degree in matters transcendental.

I have, no doubt, you made a clear and comprehensive study of Utopia, the product on similar lines of that master mind, Sir Thomas More.

Numerous attempts have been made to put in practice the psychopathic principles of Utopia as applied to affairs of state, but without success.

Human incapacity in that respect goes back to the War between God and the Devil, which occurred in the upper regions.

Jehovah dealt Satan a solar plaxus blow which knocked him out of Heaven. He fell to earth and lit in the Garden of Eden where sinless Adam and Eve were honeymooning. He took on the form of an insinuating serpent and injected into their blood some of his savage spirit "of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born in Stygian cave forlorn midst horrid shapes and shrieks and sights unholy."

Their contaminated blood was passed to all posterity which means a continuous war between the good and the bad.

I apprehend you did not have in mind Milton's "Paradise Lost" when making your pen picture of a world of peace.

I infer such a state as you propose must have at its head a powerful chief to hold in check periodical eruptions necessarily resulting from such a heterogeneous aggregation of polyglot nations. He must be endowed with autocratic power, otherwise all would soon blow up in smoke.



Col. G. W. Hardy (2):

The question is could he and his advisers successfully resist the serpentine solicitations and wiles of his Satanic Majesty whose relations would be somewhat similar to those between Christ and Satan when the latter offered Christ the whole world if he would fall down and worship him. I hardly believe such leadership could be found. None such has existed in the world's history. There never was but one perfect man and the Devil had no part in his makeup, God Almighty alone could raise up another such.

The primary purpose of all government is to protect the weak from the strong, but the great difficulty with all government is that it draws to itself more and more power until finally war breaks out between the government and the governed with the result of the government's downfall. "From the beginning, is now, and ever shall be world without end."

I regret that I cannot give a more favorable view for the possible result of your work.

In case you should occupy the position in the new republic's cabinet of Chancellor or Keeper of the Conscience of the Chief Executive, I hope you will not meet the fate of Sir Thomas More, who as you know was appointed Chancellor by the great reformer Henry the Eighth, and lost his head by royal decree for failure to correctly interpret a matter of conscience as applied to the King.

Sincerely yours,

W. M. SLEEPER

WMS/EBB

9/2  
noted  
George Washington  
in also  
Thomas Jefferson  
in your book  
Neander  
within  
of my  
to one or more  
H.

March 21, 1940.

Judge W. M. Sleeper,  
Sleeper, Baynton & Kendall,  
Attorneys at Law,  
Waco, Texas.

Dear Will:

Surely I was glad to receive your beautiful letter of March 19, 1940. This brief but severe criticism of my "Effusion" does me, unintentionally, great honor as it seems to have caused your great mind to reach into the stars, to touch the ethereal blue and to consider that infinite power who in one blow sent the Devil howling into hell and also created the only perfect man who ever trod the face of this earth. Am sorry to see, however, that you are prone to believe that because God knocked the Devil out of Heaven and let him fall upon earth that therefore his stings and contaminating influence must remain here forever and hence that sin and error, trouble and turmoil and war are likewise our portion for all time, but this is not so my dear boy, else God would not have sent his only begotten son to relieve the burdens and bear the sins of all mankind. Nor would that Son, our Lord, ever have written that pamphlet of magnificent fiction called the Prodigal Son to show that no matter how low man may fall and to what depths of degradation he may tumble, he may yet be cleansed and redeemed.

If then an individual can be so cleansed and redeemed so can a nation, which is but a collection of individuals. And if one nation can be so cleansed so can any nation or all nations, "polyglots" or whatnot.

Some believe in the doctrine of total depravity and that since the Devil left his stings, his sting and stain that therefore every child born into the world is "born in sin"; that is, he bears sin within him from birth. I do not believe any such doctrine. Every person is born into an atmosphere of sin and may by his very environment become more and more sinful but at his birth I think he was as pure and stainless as his Maker. Therefore, I do not

Judge W. M. Sleeper (2):

March 21, 1940.

believe that because one has sinned that he must forever be a sinner.

Likewise neither do I believe that because since the world began there have, at frequent intervals, been wars that for that reason, (which is no reason) there must be war forever. I rather believe, paraphrasing your own sentence that "From the beginning" there should have been no war, that there should be none "now" and that forever more "world without end" there should be no war. Nobody believes in war, nobody wants war, every one knows that war is criminal, brutal, silly and foolish. Then why should it continue? If there were no weapons or implements of warfare there would be no war. If the nations of the world should agree and lay down their arms there would be no more war.

No, Will, I am not so egotistical as to believe I could write an article on any subject that would be acceptable to all nations, nor do I believe such a man lives. Then you may ask why write it all? My answer is, without effort there is no accomplishment. If any article written could have the effect of drawing all nations together in convention where they might look each other in the face and discuss these matters then as in our own case when our constitution was written in 1787 and presented in convention at Philadelphia some compromise might be reached, as at Philadelphia, that would be satisfactory. And if a world convention should agree upon anything that would last for one hundred fifty years it would be worthwhile and I respectfully submit that if no one ever tries to assemble the nations in convention it will never be done.

I do not believe that my plan as written for the organization of an international union will ever be adopted and to be frank I did not intend it as a perfect instrument but I did not think it as defective as you describe it. Your letter compares it to a doughnut and says (not exactly in those words) that the biggest thing about it is the hole in it. This may be true, but fools venture where wise men dare not tread.

Now, Will, you are about as old as I am but you don't want to be an old foggy and I don't want ever again to hear you give credence to the doctrine that because a thing has heretofore always been that so it must remain, or, that because a thing has never been done that it is impossible.

Judge E. H. Sleeper (3):

March 21, 1940.

Let me call your attention to these facts. Only a few years before our time the world was flat, it had always been flat but as we now know, it did not have to remain flat forevermore. Only a few years ago one Darius Green with his flying-machine emerged from the loft of his barn only to light suddenly in his back lot with several broken bones. Everybody knew that to fly a heavier than air machine could not be done and therefore it must not be done "now and forevermore".

Bulwer Lytton nearly two hundred years ago laid down upon his couch and dreamed the Utopia or coming race. This Utopia or coming race were to have their being in a subterranean world where there was no sun, moon nor stars. This coming race, in his imagination, seized the electricity that seemed to pervade this subterranean territory and soon put it into practical execution to the extent that he there depicts not only an improvement upon the Wright airplane propelled through the atmosphere by electricity (all of which at the time of his writing was prophecy but all of which have been fulfilled) but gives almost an accurate description of our incandescent lights and arc lights utilized in our residences and upon our streets today. He went far in advance of any of the electrical appliances known to this age when he created in his imagination what is called the "vril" (electric) staff, apparently the ordinary walking cane, with which, surcharged as he had it with electricity, he could point at the monstrous beasts larger than our present day alligators, lions or elephants indeed and by releasing this "vril" would cast them into a cinder at almost any given distance. And he further depicts the yet unfulfilled prophecy of an individual encasement whereby a person would encase himself and surcharge this encasement with electricity so that when he raised his arm he put forth in flying condition as an airplane his individual body. All these at the time of his dream were things that had not been done and therefore could not be now and forevermore "world without end".

In our own day Curtis Wright and Mr. Edison made these prophecies practical for the utility of man. The waters in the ocean are many fathoms in depth, the bottom had never been explored and therefore could not be and it was needless to try, but a change has been set up, and another dreamer, Jules Verne, walked upon the bottom of the ocean and so this prophecy has been fulfilled by the diving bells and the submarine now in existence throughout the world.

Judge N. W. Sleeper (4):

March 21, 1940.

Revelations by St. John speaks of the music of the spheres. But sound had not been snatched from the atmospheric currents in harmonious strains and put in intimate practical juxtaposition with the timpanum of the human ear and therefore would never be "Now and Forevermore" - But it has been, it is, as demonstrated by the radio. In the light of progress, of advancement and of change, it is a false and obsolete doctrine that what is will always be, or, what is not will never be "world without end now and forevermore".

I sincerely believe if the nations would consent to lay aside their arms and stop spending the entire substance of the earth in this foolish competition of preparedness for war we would have international peace.

There is one other way - but we do not believe it can be done and therefore do not try. That is, if all men could expunge from their systems - selfishness, the source of all sin, error and evil, we would not only have universal peace, but we would be ready for the millennium, which some profound students of the prophets of old and the measurements of the pyramids of Egypt believe will begin in A.D. 1941, and so my dear Will, permit me to subscribe myself "Now and forevermore world without end" Amen.'

Sincerely your friend,

G. W. WADSWORTH

GWA:CH.

CUMBERLAND UNIVERSITY

LEBANON, TENNESSEE  
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

105

December '18

Dear Mr. Bryan:

Your letter accompanying the copies of the old Cumberland STUDENT sent my mind spinning back to the year when you and Garnett were here in the law school. I entered the literary department in the fall of 1887 and took my A.B. degree in '91, graduating on the same stage with Cordell Hull, Chief Justice Grafton Green, and lesser lights. I used to see you and Garnett often on West Main street.

Incidentally, I am not a "Reverend," as your letter indicates. just a school teacher. After taking my doctorate in languages I taught for nine years at Cumberland then spent twenty years at Castle Heights Military Academy in Lebanon until I sold the plant in 1921. Year before last I came to the university as Chancellor, but finding administrative weakness which the Board refused to remove, I handed in my resignation. One year later the Board justified my charges by dismissing both president and dean, then a little later called me to the presidency.

I am very glad for the university's sake to get the Student, and thank you for sending it. The copies will go into our archives.

The law school is facing very serious difficulties, as the enclosed letter and pamphlet indicate. Sincerely I hope you can send a generous contribution at this critical juncture. Next year we are to have a big centennial celebration here. Can you not arrange to come?

What relation is my old Castle Heights boy and Nakanawa patron,

Dr. W. J. Bryan of Tulsa? Your son, I think, for he came from Abilene.  
Mr. W. J. Bryan  
Abilene, Texas

Cordially yours,

S. S. Rice



# Christmas GREETINGS

'Tis sweet to sit, as "Yule-Tide" draws near,  
 And ponder over the passing year;  
 Can we view with pride the deeds gone by  
 And face the future without a sigh?  
 All our deeds, good or bad, will appear  
 To uplift or mar the coming year.

'Tis not what we take, but what we give,  
 That makes this world a fit place to live;  
 The joy of living will never end  
 As long as we have one loyal Friend;  
 'Twas in a manger where Faith gave birth  
 To true friendship, Love and Peace on earth.

*H. E. Hoover*

A fisherman's pin-point lantern; the breakers booming  
On the granite jetty; the lighthouse, and the Point looming.

They are all mine now: cities and rivers;  
The Negro laughter and singing, the rooted death  
Of their pole-fishing, their tap-dance bricklaying;  
Cliff-faced grain elevators; switch-lights gleaming  
And blinking on the shining rails; the tree-frog clack  
Of box-cars, and the whistle streaming hoarsely back.

All life is mine: the gnats and the ants and beetles  
In the thicket of tall blood-weed; the bloated spider  
Making a gluttonous meal of a trussed wasp;  
Boys swimming naked together in a green pool;  
The couple emerging, close and lover-wise,  
From the tangled woods, lost in each other's eyes.

by John A. Lomax

“GET DOWN, come in and suffer with me,” said Ex-Senator W. J. Bryan (not William Jennings) when he met me in the driveway of his beautiful home in Abilene, Texas. He had invited me to come out and read through his scrapbooks—four huge volumes of clippings covering half a century. I was interested in the scrapbooks, though more interested in the man who had put them together. Yet the clippings themselves gave a vivid picture of the real Senator Bryan—lawyer, ranchman, politician, *raconteur*, *sine qua non*, *ne plus ultra*, *e pluribus unum* good fellow; the father of Tex Bryan, his partner in the ranching business; husband of the real boss of both ranch and home, a sweet-faced, gentle lady of the almost extinct old school.

“When I first drove cattle through the region where Abilene now lifts its skyscrapers,” ruminated Senator Bryan, “the town was so lonesome that the jackrabbits



days when one man could rope and tie down a fifteen hundred pound outlaw Longhorn, loose in the thicket and wild as an antelope, wherever he would run on him. Such a contest—one man alone, one horse, two ropes, against the dynamite of an untamed maverick steer—furnished an exhibition of courage and skill unsurpassed in the history of man's conquest of the brute world. Dad-dim it, I say it's a shame," Senator Bryan repeated, "when you think of the contrast of those grand old days and now. Then you had the loyal, friendly, hard-ridin', straight-shootin', horse-wranglin', cow-punchin', hell-raisin' cowboy, ropin' and tyin' down the mavericks wherever he found 'em. Now the rodeo fellers put on a show and charge money for you to see tin-horn, city-slick cowboys throwing fancy loops on little calves with their mothers mooin' in distress on the outside of the pen!"

Out at his country place near Hamlin, Texas, Senator Bryan and "Tex" still run the ranch founded by Colonel Wash Bryan, his father. Even before the Civil War Colonel Wash Bryan was a large cattle owner, his headquarters being then in Falls County. His brand T Diamond still adorns his son's cattle. He sent his son, the Senator, to the first session of the Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College in 1876, and later to Cumberland University Law School, where survived stories of the great Texas Senator Joseph Weldon Bailey. Senator Bryan thinks that the first faculty and the first student body of A. & M. were without parallel in Texas educational history, and he can prove it, too, if you will listen to him long enough. He tells an amusing story of how, once upon a time, the A. & M. band first serenaded and then stampeded his herd of cattle, as he was

cattle ran in a huge circle and then came back in order to hear a second tune.

Once Senator Bryan was boss of a herd of T Diamond steers being driven overland to Dodge City, Kansas. Only eighteen years old at the time, he acted as trail boss on the journey and then sold the herd. "Before we got to Dodge City a Kansas cyclone came up and blew off all the mule-eared rabbits' ears." He liked Dodge City so well that he stayed on for a month—

"In those days forever gone  
Bless us, how we carried on!"

At Dodge City he met John Chisum, and then Shanghai Pierce, who had just driven up from the Gulf Coast a herd of his "sea lions"—the same Shanghai Pierce who once contracted for 100,000 bulls to feed the Cuban revolutionists. "At that time the railroad cut Dodge City into halves. On one side of the railroad you *couldn't* ride into saloons and drink while seated on horseback; on the other side everything was wide open and fancy free. Honest folks, too; at least they paid their debts. One man told me that he had done a hundred thousand dollar business in one year and lost only a pint of liquor.

"No more rip-roarin' town ever bucked the tiger. The floosics and doneys and patooties—the babies that had been runnin' loose on the open range—all came into town to ornament the dance halls. The wild boys from Texas were glad to see them. And hell was poppin' every minute after sundown. A ministerial cowboy preached a good sermon in a saloon one night taking for his text: 'He goeth forth in the morning full of bug juice and lo in the evening

through. They had a loosnin' up comin' to them. One driver said when he had delivered a thousand wild, mossy-horned steers from the Gulf Coast: 'We brought 'em a-runnin', we drove 'em across Texas, the Territory and Kansas a-runnin', and you can see for yourself that we are turnin' 'em over to you a-runnin'. And if you and your men don't ting-herd 'em tonight, they'll still keep a-runnin'."

The scrapbook must wait for another time. Much history is there, especially about the moving tides of politics and the economic growth of the state. The Senator's love for the masterful and beautiful in literature and his rare sense of humor are shown over and over again. For example, I ran across this letter from Bob Ingersoll to the Reverend Mr. Buckley of New York City, editor of the religious organ of the Northern Methodists; the letter announces the shipping of a demijohn of whiskey:

"I send you some of the most wonderful liquor that ever drove the skeleton from the feast or painted landscapes on the brain of man. It is the mingled soul of wheat and corn."

"In it you will find the sunshine and the shadow that chase each other o'er the billowing field; the breath of June; the dew of the night; the carol of the lark; the wealth of summer and autumn's rich content, all golden with imprisoned light."

"Drink it and you will hear the voices of men and maidens singing the harvest song mingled with the laughter of children. Drink it and you will feel within your blood the dreamy tawny dusk of many perfect days. For forty years this liquid joy has been held within staves of oak, longing to touch the lips of man."

and a few pages further on, as if in contrast, a description

"I have witnessed a drouth in Texas. The earth was iron and the heavens brass. Dust crowded the thoroughfares and choked the travellers. Water courses ran dry and grass scorched and crackled, corn became twisted and wilted, stock died around the last water holes, the ground cracked in fissures and the songs of birds died out in parched throats. Men despaired. The whole earth prayed: 'Rain, rain, rain! Oh Heaven send rain!' Suddenly a cloud rises above the horizon and floats into vision like an angel of hope. It spreads a cool shade over the burning and glowing earth. Expectation gives life to desire. The lowing herds look up. The shriveled flowers open their tiny cups. The corn leaves untwist and rustle with gladness. And just when all trusting, suffering life opens her confiding heart to the promise of relief, the cloud, the cheating cloud, like a heartless coquette, gathers her drapery about her and floats scornfully away, leaving the angry sun free to dart his fires of death into the open heart of all suffering life. Such a cloud without rain is any form of infidelity to the soul in its hour of need."

"Did you ever hear of the brand ascribed to Judge Lynch, the fabled umpire who presided at the quick, vigilantes' trials of cow thieves?" asked Senator Bryan the following day as we rolled along towards his 7,000 acre T Diamond ranch, forty miles northwest of Abilene. "Judge Lynch used a branding iron which pictured a buzzard sitting on a fence-rail. Cow thieves let cattle graze on, that wore that sign. They never bothered 'em." Pushing his Cadillac up to sixty miles, the Senator rambled on: "And speaking of cow thieves, a friend from up North once complained to me that he could never understand why in the early days of the cattle country the people of the West would sometimes free a murderer and then hang a man for stealing

~~Running loose in the world who ought to be hung and~~  
nary a yearling that ought to be stole. And I think he saw the point."

Some fat Hereford steers moved lazily away from the car as we drove up to the paling fence surrounding the ranch house. A bunch of turkeys gobbled a welcome. No other sounds marred the peaceful quiet of the sunshiny afternoon. The Senator looked affectionately at the one-story ranch house.

"My mother," said the Senator, "who managed the T Diamond ranch while Father fought through the Civil War, was probably as good a cowman as ever lived in the world. She used scissors instead of a knife to mark the calves in the spring. She was known far and wide as the cattle queen of Texas. Her saddle is in the museum of Hardin-Simmons College. I guess I gave her some trouble. George Eaton, who was assassinated near Marlin in 1875, once said to my father when I was two years old, 'Watch out for this boy of yours. He is either going to make a smart man or a hell of a rascal.' Everything I have done has been a success—even my failures," mused the Senator.

"That wooden ox-yoke over the entrance in its time has been to Jefferson and back, and that skillet in the yard we used when we killed a yearling and bedded him in it or mixed and cooked a mess of son-of-a-gun. . . . See that row of old cow and calf bells hanging on the gallery eaves? You can play a tune on them if you know how. I picked them up around the ranch. Back in the days of the open range each cowboy carried one wrapped up in his bedding. At night he belled his cutting horse and turned him out to graze. The next morning the tinkle of the bell told where to find him. His bell didn't sound like any other.

"Come into the front room and I'll show you some

~~pastors or clergymen turned up their noses at me~~  
for a sudden rain. "That picture of Teddy Roosevelt reminds me that when I was State Senator, Judge Peeler of Austin, Sam Webb of Albany and I were appointed to entertain that gentleman when he visited the Legislature. He took to us. We got at him through his stomach. When he told us good-bye he said, 'If you ever want anything in Washington, some small thing such as a Democrat deserves, I'll give it to you.' There's a good likeness of Franklin Roosevelt, too, but he ain't my hero, though I'm not talking much. Next to him you see the *Nine Old Men*, the best court in the world. I regret that they are talked about as they are. I shore was with those sweethearts when they knocked out the N.R.A.

"Who would think that John Garner ever looked like the ugly little dogie in that photograph, taken when he and I were in the Legislature, when some one said of us, 'Yes, they are in the Legislature, but they don't know what fur.' You know that John came from Jim Wells's district on the Rio Grande, where Jim said he could swim enough Mexicans across the river to elect a good Democrat and vote 'em before their hair got dry. I understand that was his regular practice. Schluter of Jefferson, John Garner and I were on a Legislative committee in 1901 to re-district the state. We all three hankered after Washington. We made history when we cut out John's district; for he landed permanently. Schluter and I didn't have much luck.

"There hangs a picture of Thomas C. Cathright, outstanding as an educator, the first president of the A. & M. College. I was there on the opening day. He was my favorite teacher. He often said to us: 'Young men, never go to a place where you would not feel proud for your people to find you if you happened to die.' Here is Judge A. W.

William Jennings Bryan, the Cross of Gold hero, and the venerable Governor Frank Lubbock; also my political hero, the statesman Joseph Weldon Bailey; General W. P. Wozen-craft, who once offered to loan me five thousand dollars without interest.

"That Knott cartoon, 'The New Deal,' is good for man or beast. But the best cartoon Knott ever drew—there it is—is the average legislator with his brain exposed and that scientist examining it with a microscope, and doing his durndest to determine just what is in that brain—plenty of ideas but no logic or common sense.

"You see Will Rogers up there smiling as usual and feeling at home. Mae West's picture was put up by the junior member of the firm, 'Tex' Bryan, my son. More pictures? An autographed photograph of Speaker Seabury of Brownsville; the Knott Negro on horseback singing 'I'm ready for the first round-up'; the cat who walks the fence at midnight, yelling till he gets results, for everybody comes; a grey-whiskered ranchman looking at the last buffalo; Tom Love, who causes so much noise; the largest herd of Longhorns in existence, on the ranch of L. A. Schreiner near Kerrville; A. T. Hoover of Canadian, one of the best among my twenty-two law classmates in Cumberland University—classmates when I graduated in 1886; George Saunders who was an authority on the Old Chisholm Trail; Reverend Ira Landreth, classmate in Cumberland University, once candidate for Vice President on the Prohibition ticket; Ex-Congressman Claude Hudspeth, natural product of the Pecos country; the great Irish singer, Scanlan, whom I once heard at Kansas City sing 'Peekaboo' and 'Gathering Myrtle with Mary'; Andrew B. Martin and Judge Green, law teachers at Cumberland University. Here's the Populist mule with whiskers on; that's a Yale boy; those twelve Negroes were

best Negro that ever walked the earth, is lost. They told me he once fed cattle at Tulsa. I looked through the graveyard but could find no trace of him.

"Here's a flock of beautiful women. There isn't one of them that a feller oughtn't to be willing to spend a cow and a day on. I hung around that pretty little Greek girl like Grant around Richmond. This next girl caused me to buy a Quackenbos grammar and take it down to the ranch to fix up my grammar. She belonged to the educated class that called a herd of Longhorns a 'squad of cattle.' Two of the boys fought a duel over this one in Cumberland University. One boy wrote:

' 'Tis the hour when from the bower  
The nightingale's deep notes are heard;  
'Tis the hour when lovers' vows  
Sound sweet in each whispered word.'

The other boy didn't like Byron. Anyhow, they fought a duel about the girl, and she was worth it.

"That row of old railroad passes dates from the time when the members of the Legislature took 'em away from the boys. Look at the skull of the best cutting horse that ever circled a cow, and the tooth of another whose equal never wore hair. One lived thirty-four years, and lightning killed him. That iron Gila monster is a bootjack. I found that buffalo knife in 1876. See its saw-blade. These are iron shoes from oxen. The buffalo hunters from Dodge City once put iron shoes on oxen and drove old blue, high-wheeled government wagons. This shoe fell off on the T Diamond when an ox got loose and went back into circulation. You don't see such coffee grinders any more as

The Senator paused before a beautifully tinted daguerreotype a hundred years old: "My father got this picture away back in 1837—Rebecca Bryan, who married Daniel Boone. She was some kin of the family. A Bryan also married a sister of Daniel Boone." Night had fallen before we had seen half the mementos that festooned the walls of the room.

Before Senator Bryan and I separated for the night he found a friend in the hotel lobby whose ranch was located near Silver City, New Mexico, and this ranchman told us a story:

"In the early cattle trail days, when Oklahoma was known as the Indian Territory, a certain Federal Judge, one Parker, was known for the severity of his decisions. In a cowcamp brawl of a passing trail herd, a Mexican cook shot and killed a cowboy in a dispute over a game of cards. Friends of the dead cowboy wanted to lynch the cook at once, but one of their number, the trail-herd boss, persuaded them to wait until he had seen Judge Parker about the matter. It is related that he and the Judge had several drinks together the next day in Fort Smith, Arkansas, and that the Judge readily agreed to pass sentence of death upon the Mexican according to the ideas of the trail herder. Plenty of oratory was asked for along with the sentence in order to make the proceedings entirely legal and proper. This is Judge Parker's sentence:

" 'José Manuel Miguel Xavier Gonzales, in a few months it will be spring, the snow of winter will flee away, the ice will vanish, and the air will become soft and balmy. In short, José Manuel Miguel Xavier Gonzales, the annual miracle of the year's awakening will come to pass, but you won't be here. The rivulet will run its purling course to

blossom as the rose, still you won't be here. From every tree-top some wildwood songster will carol his mating song, butterflies will sport in the sunshine, the busy bee will hum happily as it pursues its accustomed vocation, the gentle breezes will tease the tassels of the wild grasses, and all nature, José Manuel Miguel Xavier Gonzales, will be glad, but you won't be here to enjoy it; for I command the sheriff or some other officer or officers of this county to lead you out to some remote spot, swing you up by the neck to a nodding bough of some sturdy oak, and there let you hang till you are dead, dead, dead. And then, José Manuel Miguel Xavier Gonzales, I command further that such officer or officers retire quietly from your swinging, dangling corpse, that the vultures may descend from the heavens upon your filthy body and pick the putrid flesh therefrom till nothing will remain but the bare, bleached bones of a cold-blooded, copper-colored, bloodthirsty, chili-eating, guilty, sheep-herding, Mexican son-of-a-bitch.' "

Just before the Senator told me goodnight, I asked him to give me some of the cowboys' rhymed dance calls, used to whoop up the merriment in between the orders to "balance all," "swing corners," "lady on the left," "promenade," and so on. He patted his foot and chanted:

"All join hands and circle eight,  
Knock down Sal and pick up Kate.

\*A New Mexico Federal Judge, Franklin Pierce Benedict, also claims to be the hero of this story. For a more plausible account, see R. E. Twitchell's *Old Santa Fe*, pp. 348-50.

On to the next, don't be slow,  
Make that wooden leg jar the flo'.

Hole in the haystack; chicken fell through,  
Can't get a fat girl, skinny girl'll do.

Come on, boys, lemme tell you somethin',  
Little bit of chicken makes a whole lot of dumplin'.

Rained all night, the road got muddy;  
Hugged Sallie Goodin till I couldn't stand studdy."

Sometimes the Senator joins the callers at the Cowboys'  
Christmas Ball, held annually at Anson, Texas, in honor of  
Larry Chittenden, the cowboy poet.

## by Wayne Gard

NOWADAYS, to lose one's shirt at the races means merely to go without pin money for a week—or, at worst, to put a gold watch in hock for a fortnight. But in the day of the quarter horse, when "the turf" meant virgin prairie sod instead of a meticulously graded and sprinkled track, the wagerer was in real danger of going home in his undershirt. Worse than that, an unlucky cowhand might even have to lug his saddle back to the ranch and wait until pay day before he could buy a new mount of his own.

When he backed a winning horse, on the other hand, he might come into sudden possession of a new Stetson, a store-bought suit, a wool blanket, or a buffalo robe. If any of these articles came from Indian hands, he likely would spread them over ant hills for a day or two to make sure they were deloused; but he was not particular what he took in on wagers, since hard money was scarce and

W. J. (John) Bryan—

114

# THE OF '79 FINDING HOLLYWOOD GIRLS ON CAMPUS, A FRILLY DAYS OF COLLEGE AND WHOLE TEXAS COLLEGE

NELL BIDIECHER

Bryan, better known as John, went back to Ag— other day.

campus of the institution was a member of the first class in 1879, he found girls from the state colleges at Denton, and "Hollywood women" down in the filming of the picture, "We've Never Been

great coliseum the word that Senator Bryan was. And presently the picture baron who is getting old and never in viewpoint of being photographed— of the Hollywood girls on so reports go.

to A.&M. having been here, he was queried about it led to one of those interesting and joyful conversations the like of which few 1942 are fortunate enough to see.

A.&M. college when it a shaver," Senator Bryan said. "I was in college there 1879 when it was simply a monarch in a forest. We it 150, started it off.

## SELF MADE

were great teachers filliculty. Each was such an personality that it was possible for them to squad—ther," he observed. "When I was young it was the our political leaders stood of the crowd. The babies in the wagon yard were who built Texas — and — but out of the wagon be individuals who could recall that O. M. Roberts, fized to the A.&M. board in as "The Old Alcalde" to have borrowed the four st him to telegraph the democratic convention his when it nominated him nor."

I stepped into the big where pictures were taken," he said regarding of the other day, which alone in his ear. "It on known that an old rom among the boys of present, so it was here the Hollywood girls pick—the show. Two of them to look at me at the time. They knew how a dreamy look and with a smile and the frag— a few Cologne created tion that would simply

the surviving members of the Aggie class of '79 held a meeting at the college. About 30 of the old-timers were present. Senator Bryan is proud of the boys with whom he was graduated. It is easy to detect that the original A. and M. Cadets were mutually proud of their school and their corps and as the years went by each of them had reason to be more proud of his membership in the group.

## POSTMASTER GENERAL

There was Albert S. Burleson, who served in Congress many years and became postmaster general of the United States; Edgar Mullins ("a great boy"), who headed the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., many years; Temple Houston, son of Sam Houston; Wash Hardy, who was lieutenant colonel of the 4th Texas Volunteers in the Spanish-American war; E. B. Cushman, a great engineer "who mapped the Southern Pacific through the rough red hills of the Rio Grande and out to El Paso;" and Col. Pink Downs, Temple attorney and Texas leader who died a few years ago. Cushman hall on the A. & M. campus honors E. B. Cushman.

One of the outstanding citizens of Waco, Will Sleeper, is one of the half dozen or so survivors of the class. When Senator Bryan went to College Station a few days ago he stopped at Waco intending to have Mr. Sleeper accompany him the remainder of the trip, but found him seriously ill of pneumonia. "I'm worried about Will," he said. "The school, of course," the colorful West Texan continued, "is a duplicate, or at least runs strongly toward West Point. Many a night I've listened to some guard call out his post from the fourth stoop up. Educationally you could, after leaving military matters, call it a college of belles lettres."

"When I left school and bade goodbye as I looked up to room 25 on the third floor and on the north side of the tower, I turned my trail toward the west. But, I think now if I have a good heart and keep on living it is because I carried a thousand cords of wood and water up the steps to that third floor and answered all roll calls down to the section room, and I learned to dress in a very few minutes to answer bugle call as the boys assembled before the building."

"On leaving I drifted to a ranch out in the west, something like 200 miles west of Fort Worth, but this was a point to which we had to

career that have been mine marks the brightest era of all lives; especially for a man who lives the private and individual way of life and doesn't like to be seated on another fellow's knee," observed the tall, erect, sparkling-eyed frontiersman.

The senator was pressed for "a complete biography, some time," and he answered that he had never been interested very much in giving a biography. "I recall that a newspaperman, when I first entered the state senate, wanted to know something about my private life. I finally handed him a picture of myself and wrote beneath it 'a man without a biography.'"

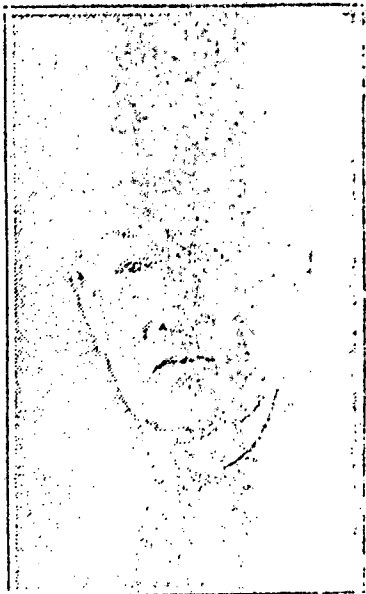
"Speaking of biographies," he added. "One of the outstanding events of my life that I can recall was what a cow man said about me when my father was at his ranch aiding in putting up a herd. It was at headquarters of the W 7 Bar ranch. The owner, George Heaton, had attracted my attention, and I apparently had attracted him as I played around the men. I thought he was paying attention to me because I had eaten so much."

"Wash," Heaton said, addressing my father. "I have been watching this sprout of yours and, you know, he puzzles me somewhat, but I've reached this opinion: he's going to make a hell of a smart man or he's going to make the damndest rascal on earth. I can't tell which."

It was 40 years afterward, in the legislature, that a beef buyer who was buying that herd of W 7 Bar cattle that day asked Bryan, "Say, John, have you forgotten what Heaton said about you?"

As a teen age lad, John W. Bryan went home from A & M College to his father's home in Falls County. The elder Bryan had just bought "priority" on a buffalo dug-out in Jones County for 40 dollars. With the "priority" and 40 dollars went rights to graze everything for 20 miles around—the real owner of which was not known. John set out to take charge of the T-Diamond cattle on that range.

John made the ride on his pony from home to Waco the first night. He rode a day or two and found himself at nightfall in dense timber, over in the cross-timber country. He'd about decided he would have to "lay out" that night, he recalls, when he sighted a small log cabin in a little clearing. Stopping, he found a woman there alone. He told her he wanted to stay there that night. "It told her old story



W. J. BRYAN

act much like she wanted me around. She said they were about out of meat and her husband had gone to kill a deer. She slipped down and spied the T-Diamond on his saddle. He wore a 4 & 10 college fatigue suit. "I always thought those things led her to figure I was fairly respectable," he said.

"After supper the lady told me to go outside while she went to bed and then come in and lay out on a pallet on the floor in front of the front door. About 11 o'clock one of the house hit the front door and banged right on into the room. I was stretched out there like I was asleep, snoring," Bryan related.

"Molly, what's this here in the floor," Bryan said the fellow asked.

"A kid," she replied.

"A kid—what kind of a kid?"

TEXAS A. & M....races the glory story  
of vengeance and victory—hearts and  
heroism—that will command your every  
emotion to blazing action!

WALTER  
WANGER'S  
SPECTACULAR TRIUMPH!

# WE'VE NEVER BEEN LICKED

INSPIRED BY THE FIGHTING SOULS OF TEXAS A. & M.

with  
Richard Quine Anne Gwynne Noah Beery, Jr. Martha O'Driscoll Harry Davenport  
William Frawley Edgar Barrier Bob Mitchum and Bill Stern OF RADIO'S THRILLING  
ARMY HOUR

Screen Play, Norman Reilly Raine • Nick Grinde

Original Story, Norman Reilly Raine

Directed by JOHN RAWLINS

Produced by WALTER WANGER

A UNIVERSAL PICTURE

COMING SOON TO LEADING THEATRES EVERYWHERE.. *Watch for It! See It!*



# John Bryan Helped Set Out Mesquites

By N. H. KINCAID

W. J. Bryan, Abilene's favorite Senator, has been living a busy and successful life as a West Texan since his graduation from A. & M. in 1879. He is so well known to the makers of Abilene and to the cattlemen of the West, as well as to the statesmen at Austin, that he has become a legend in the state.

"Well, I hope there are no more like you out there!" was Governor Sayre's laconic verdict of him when representative Bryan finessed the State Hospital Bill through the House and then from the governor himself in 1901. "But the State's having such a hospital in the first place, and then having it located in Abilene, had been a community project," Senator Bryan insists. There were only 5 others in the U. S. then and they were all on the Atlantic Seaboard.

John Bryan's exploit as a cowman with his famous T Diamond Ranch have made local history since 1897; it was then that his father moved his stock westward from Falls County. In 1884 John Bryan, among the other citizens, viewed Abilene's first Fair, sponsored by the Abilene Reporter. A lone cotton stalk was in the exhibit. Upon seeing it, it was young Bryan who surmised to Colonel Chalmers that "the cotton sack is now on its way to the cattle country." It was he who wore the first white "billed" shirt in Taylor County and stopped the celebration at the opening of the new court house.

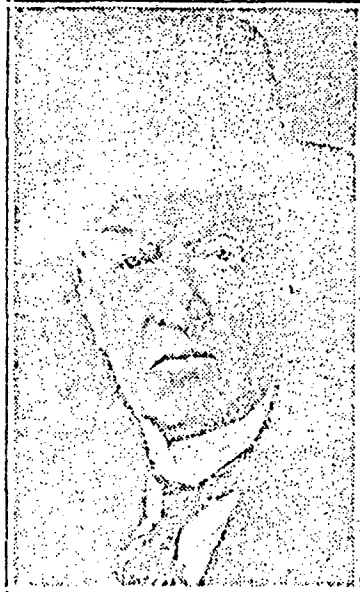
And speaking of stopping celebrations, he did it again nearly fifty years later when he stole the show from the glamour girls at A. & M.'s birthday celebration. He had been a member of the first graduation class, way back, and when it was noised about that he was present on this occasion, room was made for him among the Hollywood stars and the spotlight was his. Their show was suspended, while the Senator set about proving to them that a ready and trim figure were not confined to the cadets of their own generation.

## INTERESTING CAREER

But in all of W. J. Bryan's long and interesting career — and it has been interesting and most enjoyable, he asserts — there has been nothing that has given him more pleasure than his hobby of collecting things. He is a connoisseur of the rise of civilization in the Middle West, for his mementoes run the gamut of the white man's experiences here:

low and in everything about him. He takes time to chat awhile or to tell a good joke; and how it does thrill him to see the older boys' remembered!

Tall, erect, perfectly groomed, always wearing his high stiff collar, his eyes will twinkle as he tells of an interesting anecdote of some friend and then concludes admiringly, "now, he was a bird!"



W. J. BRYAN, called John by his old friends, is here pictured as Abilene usually sees him. No more widely known cattleman ever lived in the Southwest. A raconteur of brilliant wit, his vocabulary of cowman lingo is as vivid and alive as the static electricity which used to play upon the horns of a trail herd in a gathering storm. Lawmaker, orator, lawyer and pioneer cattle baron, John Bryan has had more fun than a barrel of monkeys, and today this octogenarian is still full of the zest of living and counts his friends by the tens of thousands. Some of his most hilarious experiences came from being mistaken for William Jennings Bryan, whom he knew well. They scraped up a bit of kinship at one of their numerous encounters.

mark; powder horns, bullet holes, blue back speller, two old prize pictures, and portrait of old father and hand-embroidered book marks many volumes of classics, Latin, and American, bound in hand-tooled leather and in stored scrap books of clippings dealing with men and events of yesterday, these, and many more, fill the side of the conquest of the West. By most of all, they tell a personal history of his own contribution in the forward-surgin' march — of his and his families' and his own T Diamond Ranch, which he and his son still operate.

Thirty-five years ago an Austin correspondent for the Fort Worth Record stated that one of Senator Bryan's doctrines was to hold fast to all things that are good, and that long ago the Senator had reached the conclusion that there's nothing under the high heavens as good as West Texas land. And so the Senator has collected and held fast to it, along with his other mementoes.

But he has the true west Texan slant about that, too.

"We worked for what we got," he says. "It was a hard life, true; but all a fellow expected then was a chance to buck it through. That's all a government's for — to give a man this chance to make his own living in his own way."

But when a youngster — the Senator shrugs away from definite age — "that's just my feminine predilection," chuckles, he took a T-Diamond herd up the trail to Dodge City, Kansas. Those were the days when there were still Indians on the lands and when Oklahoma was the bad lands, outlaws and cut-throats, as well, as with tricky alkali beds. "When I first drove cattle through the region where Abilene now lifts skyscrapers, the place was so lonesome that the jackrabbits were looting around the non-existent streets looking for entertainment," Bryan relates.

## EARLY ARCHITECTURE

Their own home, as was that of the other cattlemen coming then, was partly dug-out, with a dirt roof. But those coming three or four years earlier had complete dug-outs, well concealed, and their owners had to move often so as to elude the Indians. The cattlemen were the first settlers of the county, they coming in the Seventies.

Yet of all these memories and mementoes that W. J. Bryan has collected through the years, one type stands out supreme. As rare as are his scrap books and his veritable museum of collections, one feels that his great host of friends is a greater heritage still. "He is the most colorful personality in all West Texas," men say of him; and they drop their business and their plans to chat with him when he calls. And they love him.

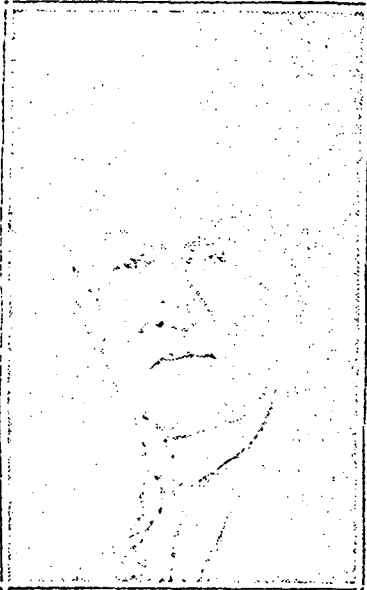
The other day I saw a laborer accost him on the streets and heard him again speak his appreciation of a speech that he had heard the Senator make some thirty years ago.

# Times, Men Change; Cattle 'Dressed Up' But Beef No Better, Says Frontiersman's Son

By FINIS MOTHERSHEAD  
Times have changed, but cattle haven't.

It's just the men . . . .

"They (the cattle) just have a little more style — they're more dressed up—but the beef isn't any better," in the opinion of former Senator W. J. Bryan.



W. J. BRYAN

That's his dictum after a backward glance to the days before there was an Abilene, a golden era which saw his father establish the T-Diamond ranch and brand so firmly that today they are associated inseparably with the name of Bryan.

It was in the summer of 1879 that Col. Wash Bryan moved westward from Falls county. With him came his wife, who courageously had saved their ranch from the disintegration which befell most others while the colonel and his neighbors saw action in the War Between the States.

"They found very little in this country," recounts the Senator, who then was a student in Texas A.&M. college. Not much later he

was a member of its first graduating class.

"There wasn't much except fellows who had left their names behind them, or cattle people like themselves (his parents)."

Once the quiet modesty with which he deplores appearance in the public prints is overcome, Bryan spins yarns of that bygone period in vigorous language. Interwoven throughout the narrative is a conspicuous thread of nostalgia.

His has been a full life, and the senator is on the sunset side of 70. A casual chronicling can only give momentary glimpses of that career and depths of the character it has molded.

John Bryan, later destined to serve more than a dozen years as a lawmaker in the Texas senate, followed his family to these parts in the winter after their arrival.

He found the Bryan ranch—its brand so strongly established that the name is never more than the T-Diamond, without use of the family name—he found the ranch with its headquarters built almost in the center of Jones county. Then there was no Abilene, nor Anson. Their birth was not until "a year or two or three later."

Only the next year, in 1880, young John Bryan made his only trip up the Chisholm trail to the rip-roaring Dodge City, Kans. A memento of that journey hangs today above the stairway in his home.

Near Albany the herd being driven up the trail to market stampeded. A steer broke his leg in the frenzied press.

"I gave him to a boy named Billy Broils," Senator Bryan recalls. He's not sure whether that's the right spelling.

"He saved those horns, and he must have liked me. He always said, they tell me, that if I lived longer than he, I was to have those horns. Billy told his administrators that, and today the horns are mine."

. . . .

At that time, cattlemen had only two outlets. They had the choice of driving their herds up the Chisholm trail, with markets at Dodge City or in Wyoming or Montana; or they could turn east, hauling the animals to Fort Worth, whence they went to Kansas City or Chicago. Ordinarily there were 2,500 to 3,000 in a trail herd.

Today, of course, transportation has altered the picture. It's made one of the big differences in the industry.

Transportation and other diminishing hardships . . . .

"You see that cow?" Senator Bryan will say, a nod of his head toward the horns on the wall. "Those cows went around with horns x x x . . . And the country produced that kind of men, too."

He utters no scathing indictment of a modern generation. But the inference is clear:

The race has grown soft.

The race has grown soft.

"But these fellows still can be trusted. They're something pretty hard to get around."

There's just no comparison in the college bred man and the wary, often homely-speeched raw product of the range. And make no mistake about it, Bryan's verdict is all in favor of the raw product.

"The buggy days may look kind of little now x x x," he muses. "It's a big step when you shift over to the Rolls Royce—but that sort of thing hasn't changed me any. I'm still a cowpuncher." This

last with a pride which overflows restraint.

...

Once the T-Diamond ran 20,000 cattle, and every year its hands would brand and earmark 3,000 calves.

There were no fences to bound the broad acres over which the T-Diamond stock ranged. Nominally, their territory was in Jones, Shackelford, Stonewall and Kent counties.

It wasn't unusual, however, for T-Diamond punchers to find their stock drifted as far as 100 miles below San Angelo.

"A man might leave in March and we wouldn't see him again until July," Bryan recounts.

The brand has been one family's three generations, a distinction not possessed by all, but John Bryan thinks the "best period was in the lifetime of my father."

It is of his father, who left his Tennessee home for Texas about 1845, that Bryan likes best to talk.

The elder Bryan, after failure of the family fortune, emigrated by way of Mississippi, where he rolled logs for \$10 a month. Eventually he turned up in Gonzales, the home of an uncle.

Wash-Bryan's first job there was

in a blacksmith shop, and there he adopted the idea for the brand he was to make famous. A rancher from a hacienda believed to be somewhere south of Mexico City placed an order for branding irons closely resembling the T-Diamond.

The design appealed to Wash Bryan and he made some mental note to use it if he ever ran cattle of his own. Within less than a decade, from that job in the smithy, he had accumulated his first \$10,000.

By the close of the 50's he had met the girl who became his wife, and they were married in Falls county. Details of the story are hazy, but Wash Bryan for a time was a Texas ranger and had his ranch operating successfully by outbreak of the War Between the States.

#### MOTHER SAVES RANCH

He left home to fight for the South, however, and all would have been lost but for John Bryan's mother. She aided her husband to bury a sizeable sum of gold, then stood guard over it and their cattle until his return.

Where stock increased, calves became mavericks and were lost on other ranches, she saw to it that from 100 to 200 calves at a time were penned. Then she summoned in the womenfolk and they used the branding irons.

Because she'd never learned to cut an earmark with a knife, Bryan's mother used her scissors.

At the close of the war, the Bryan ranch—the Diamond-T before it was moved from Falls county—was in vastly better condition than

any other roundabout.

Of his parents' staunch courage and of the stamina of men of their period Senator Bryan might talk for hours. He fills an hour's conversation entertainingly and the story is only begun . . . How his mother drove away at gunpoint highwaymen who might have tortured her, how she fired the shots which frightened cattle thieves from headquarters corrals . . .

He talks, too, of life in old Fort Griffin and its hardened citizens, who frequented the town's 15 or 20 saloons; who packed six-shooters on which the notches told a bloody story; who in the face of timidity unhesitatingly made life unbearable for a tenderfoot.

Many of those same men, for all their lawlessness, were unwaveringly loyal to their brands after giving vent to reckless spirits on infrequent visits to town.

It wasn't a question of reclaiming stolen property when they inspected other herds for their brand. The question was one of deeper significance. There was the honor of their employer and his outfit to maintain, without thought of missing property's value or personal considerations . . .

John Bryan wishes there were more men of that type today.

## Birthday Greetings

This morning we extend best wishes to a West Texas oldtimer who all but set out the mesquites and helped dig the rivers. He is Abilene's patriarchal cowman, ex-legislator, and raconteur superlative, W. J. Bryan, known to intimates as "Senator."

The occasion is Mr. Bryan's 88th birthday. He was a member of the first class at Texas A. & M. College, Oct. 4, 1876. He came West to take charge of his father, "Wash" Bryan's, cattle interests on Double Mountain Fork, as a stripling of 18. In 1878, in the month of June, he rode from Fort Phantom Hill to Buffalo Gap, a-horseback, through a severe snow-storm, passing across the flat where now sprawls the hustling City of Abilene.

The weather was always acting up, even in those days. In the great drouth of 1886-87 Mr. Bryan was bossing 18 men who were throwing 4,500 T-Diamond steers from Double Mountain Fork over to Stinking Creek in search of water. Three hundred and nineteen head died in one night. Nevertheless, the wagon cook fixed the boss a pound cake for his birthday. Ummm—good!

That was sixty years ago today. The T-Diamond is still going strong, with Mr. Bryan's son, Barnard, keeping up the family tradition. The T-Diamond is one of the oldest, if not the very oldest, cattle brands in Texas, running back to the Republic.

The Senator was one of the "Immortal Forty" Texans who turned the tide for Woodrow Wilson at Baltimore in 1912. He served as state senator in the days when Austin was a frontier town, full of pistol shots and oratory. He possesses one of the finest line of cowboy and political stories extant, and his Southwestern lingo is pure and undefiled—probably one of the few authentic cowboy vocabularies in existence, full-flowered, humorous and sharp as a brier.

The doctors are pestering the oldtimer some these days, and he suffers them to have their way occasionally, out of the large tolerance of his heart. But the young whippersnappers know their distance. You can crowd the master of the T-Diamond only so far. Try to make him stay home, will they? Hah! "Listen to me, Sweetheart!"

*Abilene Reporter-News*  
SEPTEMBER 28, 1964

# W. J. Bryan Dies; Rites Set Saturday

Funeral for Senator W. J. Bryan, 88, who came to Buffalo Gap on horseback in 1879, to develop an immense ranch interest in West Texas and to serve much of this area as representative and senator in the Texas Legislature, will be held at 10:30 Saturday morning at the Laughter-North Memorial Chapel.

The service will be conducted by the Rev. Earl Hamlett, pastor of St. Paul Methodist Church, assisted by the Rev. E. B. Surface, Presbyterian minister. Interment will be in the Masonic Cemetery under direction of Laughter-North.

Active pall bearers will be Gray Browne, Charles Clarke, Grover Chronister, Fleming James, Russell Howerton, L. C. Davis, S. J. (Lit) Winters and Jack Tucker.

Mr. Bryan died at 5:45 p. m. Thursday at his home at 1740 North First St. For the last several months he had been in failing health. Previously he was active for a man of his age and continued up to a short time ago to drive his automobile.

## KNOWN TO THOUSANDS

As one who knew the Abilene country from its early settling, he was familiar to thousands. An erect figure of dignity, he was distinguished in his attire, wearing a tall black hat, high white collar and shirt, with black string bowtie and dark suit.

Not only was he one of the earliest pioneers who helped develop the region commercially but he became an eminent figure in Texas statesmanship, having served this large area as state representative and state senator. So versed was he in the lore of the great West, he was often interviewed by prominent newspaper and magazine writers. Mr. Bryan said once such a representative spent more than a week with him getting background and atmosphere for Western stories.

The colorful pioneer ranchman and trail driver enjoyed the distinction of being one of the three sur-

See FUNERAL Pg 13 Col 5.

# Funeral for Senator Bryan, 1879 Settler, Set Saturday

(Continued from Page 1)

viving members of the first graduating class of Texas A. & M. College in 1879.

Almost immediately after his graduation he set out on horseback for Buffalo Gap in 1879. A little later his father bought for \$40 a "buffalo dugout" in what is now Jones County. Senator Bryan said the country then was so little esteemed that the seller threw in all the lands for radius of 20 miles.

## 20,000 ACRE RANCH

The elder Mr. Bryan had sent the Senator to operate his spread which later expanded to 20,000 acres, lying in Jones, Fisher and Stonewall Counties. Ranch headquarters were near present Anson. The ranch in time became the famous T-Diamond and at one time ranged 100,000 cattle. In the memorable drover days Senator Bryan helped drive cattle up the famous Chisolm Trail. Often on the hazardous way he and his men drove as many as 2,000 and 3,000 head.

The Senator's father, Wash Bryan, later moved to this area and died in Abilene in 1905.

Mr. Bryan turned to politics in 1837 after obtaining a law degree from Cumberland Law School in Tennessee. In 1900 he was elected State representative from this "jumbo" district. After four terms as representative the constituency chose him senator. The area covered a territory from Mineral Wells to Pecos. He served four years.

In 1882 he was married to Mattie Deshill of Travis County. She was the daughter of a pioneer minister. Mrs. Bryan died about 16 days ago.

Senator Bryan was blessed with a remementive memory.

Until a few months ago he was occasionally seen in town. But his health was failing and he remained at his home at 1740 North First with his cherished books and mementoes of early days. He liked to reminisce and have visits from his friends. He has a very large collection of early day newspapers and books, many of which carried long mentions of him.

He believed in man's rugged honest, liked tales of the old days. His mental storehouse of incidents and experiences of early days in this region was large. And nothing suited him more than to sit with a friend and relate his experiences, more numerous and interesting than probably any told by other pioneers of his day.

Wash Bran, his father, divided the T-Diamond Ranch among his three children. The present T-Diamond comprises 7,000 acres lying five miles north of Hamlin, on U. S. Highway 83.

Senator Bryan is survived by his two sons: Banard (Tex) Bryan of Abilene; and Dr. J. W. Bryan, Jr., physician of Tulsa, Okla. Tex Bryan was with his father when death came and Dr. Bryan arrived Thursday.

Senator Bryan was born Sept. 26, 1859, on Keechi Creek, Falls County Texas, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Wash Bryan. His father served with the Confederate Army. It was at Keechi that he obtained his early schooling.

FILE NO. 7470

THE STATE OF TEXAS, I

County of Taylor I KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS: Before me, the undersigned authority, a Notary Public, in and for Taylor County, Texas, on this day personally appeared J.M. Wagstaff and T.A. Bledsoe. of Abilene, Taylor County, Texas, known to me to be the persons who sign this affidavit, and both known to me to be credible persons, and who, after being by me duly sworn, did depose and say:

That they have each lived in Taylor County, Texas, for a period of over forty years, and that they each well knew W.J. Bryan, and his wife, Mattie Dashiell Bryan, both now deceased and that they are each familiar with the family of the said W.J. Bryan, and his wife, Mattie Dashiell Bryan, and the family history history of the said parties, and their children and heirs. That the said W.J. Bryan and the said Mattie Dashiell Bryan, his wife, were married but the one time, and that to each other That there was born of the said marriage of the said W.J. Bryan, and wife Mattie Dashiell Bryan, the following children, and the following children, only, to-wit: B.D. Bryan, a man, of the age of over fifty years now, and now living, and W.J. Bryan, Jr., a man of the age of over fifty years now, and now living. That the said B.D. Bryan lives in Abilene, Taylor County, Texas, and the said W.J. Bryan Jr. lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma. That there were no adopted children or child of the said W.J. Bryan and the said Mattie Dashiell Bryan, his wife. That the said Mattie Dashiell Bryan died in Abilene, Taylor County, Texas, on the 21st day of July, A.D. 1948 at the age of about 87, and the said Mattie Dashiell Bryan died intestate, leaving no will, and that there was no administration on her estate, and no administration was necessary, and none will be had. That all of the expenses

of her last illness, and all other indebtedness owing by her, has been paid in full. That the value of her estate was not sufficient to require the payment of a Federal Estate Tax, or a State of Texas, or any other State, Inheritance tax. That the said W.J. Bryan died in Abilene, Texas, on the 26th day of August, A.D. 1948, at the age of about 89 years. That the said W.J. Bryan died intestate, leaving no will, and that there has been no administration on his estate, and none is necessary, and that none will be had. That all of the expenses of his last illness have been paid in full, and all of his other indebtedness has been paid in full. That his estate is sufficient in value to require the payment of both a Federal Estate Tax and A State Inheritance Tax, and that proper reports are in process of being filed, and that there are sufficient funds with which to pay the said Taxes. That all of the funeral expenses of the said W.J. Bryan, and the said Mattie Dashiell Bryan have been paid in full. That the above named B.D. Bryan, and W.J. Bryan Jr., both living and both of legal age, are the sole and only heirs and children of the said W.J. Bryan, and wife Mattie Dashiell Bryan.

J.M. Wagstaff

T.A. Bledsoe

Subscribed and sworn to before me by J.M. Wagstaff and T.A. Bledsoe, on this the 21st day of September, A.D. 1948.

R.W. Haynie, Notary Public,  
Taylor County, Texas.

(SEAL)

THE STATE OF TEXAS,

County of Taylor     |   Before me, the undersigned authority, a Notary Public, in and for  
Taylor County, Texas, on this day personally appeared J.M. Wagstaff and T.A. Bledsoe, known to  
me to be the persons whose names are subscribed to the foregoing instrument. and acknowledged  
to me that they executed the same for the purposes and consideration therein expressed.

Given under my hand and seal of office this the 21st day of September, A.D. 1948.

R.W. Haynie, Notary Public,

Taylor County, Texas.

(SEAL)

FILED FOR RECORD SEPTEMBER 22, 1948 at 2:15 P.M.

RECORDED SEPTEMBER 23, 1948 at 4:00 P.M.

Mrs. Chester Hutcheson, County Clerk  
By: Edelle H. Petty, Deputy.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- W. J. Bryan Papers, Hardin-Simmons University Library, Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, Texas. The W. J. Bryan Papers have not been accessioned. In the interest of accuracy, it is appropriate to set forth the contents here in general outline form.
- A. Scraps consisting of letters, newspapers and other items dating from 1881-1942. 500 items.
  - B. Scraps consisting of personal letters received during the period of 1899-1919. 200 items.
  - C. Scraps consisting of newspaper and periodical clippings dealing with the early days found in containers labeled Ledger, Ranchman's Scrapbook, and Fulton Fire Insurance Company. 1100 items.
  - D. Scraps consisting of notes and personal letters received 1912-1920. 600 items.
  - E. Scraps consisting of notes and personal letters received during 1930-1948. 400 items.
  - F. W. J. Bryan, Notes on the early Abilene Country consisting of "Reminiscences of Fort Griffin," "T-Diamond in 1879," "Early Cowboys," and "Frontier."
  - G. File folder consisting of "The Frontier Speaks," "Fort Griffin Activities," "Molly McCabe," "Pioneer Justice" and a Tract on "Baptism."
  - H. Baylor Medical School Graduation Program, Dallas, Texas, May 26, 1921, the occasion of W. J. Bryan, Jr.'s graduation from medical school.
  - I. Congressional Record, United States Printing Office, Washington, D. C., May 8, 1913.
  - J. Fort Griffin Echo, Fort Griffin, Texas, January 4, 1879.
  - K. John A. Kouwenhoven, compiler, "America on the Move," interpretations and writings by the authors and editors of Harpers Magazine.
  - L. News Leader, Richmond, Virginia, November 14, 1916.

- M. Newspaper collection dating from 1940-1959. Probably collected by B. D. Bryan.
- N. Picture of W. J. Bryan and the remaining member of the first Texas A. & M. College class. Undated, but probably from the late 1930's.
- O. Quotations Selected by Abilene People, compiled by the Ladies of the Cemetery Association, Abilene, Texas, 1905.
- P. Railroad Passes issued to W. J. Bryan during 1907. 15 items.
- Q. Record of Dorothy Compere interviewing W. J. Bryan. Undated, but the late 1930's.
- R. Southwest Review, Autumn, 1947, Dallas, Texas.
- S. Texas Pioneer, Texas Pioneering Publishing Company, San Antonio, February-March, 1931
- T. Washington and Lee University athletic award certificates that had been presented to W. J. Bryan Jr. and B. D. Bryan. 6 items.

William Lawrence Chittenden. Ranch Verses. New York: G. P. Putnam, 1893.

G. Wash Hardy. "Peace on Earth." Shreveport, Louisiana: 1940.

N. H. Kincaid. "Bryan of the T-Diamond." (unpublished biographical manuscript).

John A. Lomax. "Stop-over at Abilene." Southwest Review. 1941, pp. 408-435.

Texas House Journal, 27th Legislature (1901), Regular Session.

Texas House Journal, 27th Legislature (1901), First and Second Called Sessions.

Texas House Journal, 28th Legislature (1903), Regular Session.

Texas House Journal, 28th Legislature (1903), First Called Session.

Texas House Journal, 29th Legislature (1905), Regular Session.

Texas House Journal, 29th Legislature (1905), First Called Session.

Texas House Journal, 29th Legislature (1906), Second Called Session.

Texas House Journal, 30th Legislature (1907), Regular Session.

Texas House Journal, 30th Legislature (1907), First Called Session.

Texas House Journal, 31st Legislature (1909), Regular Session.

Texas House Journal, 32nd Legislature (1911), Regular Session.

Interviews about W. J. Bryan:

- A. Interview with Bryan Bradberry, July, 1973, Abilene, Texas.
- B. Interview with Carol Bryan Izard, August, 1972, Abilene, Texas.
- C. Interview with George Minter, July, 1973, Abilene, Texas.
- D. Interview with Julia L. Pickard, July, 1973, Abilene, Texas.
- E. Interview with Robert Rankin, July, 1973, Abilene, Texas.
- F. Interview with Rupert N. Richardson, July, 1971, Abilene, Texas.
- G. Interview with French M. Robertson, July, 1971, Abilene, Texas.

## VITA

Samuel Luther Robertson Jr. was born in Houston, Texas, on April 28, 1940, the son of Sam L. and Portia L. Robertson. After completing his high school program at New Mexico Military Institute, Roswell, New Mexico, he entered Southern Methodist University in the Fall, 1958. Mr. Robertson also attended the United States Military Academy and McMurry College. He received a Bachelor of Science degree from McMurry College in December, 1969. Since that time, Mr. Robertson has taught in the Texas Public Schools. In addition to his teaching experience, he is the author of four professionally produced plays and a collection of poetry to be published during Fall, 1973. In January, 1970, he was admitted to the Division of Graduate Studies at Hardin-Simmons University.

Permanent address: 3501 Pin Oak Drive, Apartment 205  
San Antonio, Texas